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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The subject of this thesis is related to two great concepts which, for the last hundred years or so, have dominated the realm of men's thinking. They can be most broadly designated as "individualism" and "collectivism." To define them, generally, in terms of political theory, it might be said that individualism is expressed in those forms of government wherein the will of the community is exercised mainly for the preservation of individual liberty; while collectivism is expressed in those forms of government wherein the will of the community is directed mainly toward the securing of individual welfare by centralized planning. These two concepts have caused the division of opinion in men from the ditchdigger to philosopher. They have been behind the spilling of words and the shedding of blood, and the struggle that goes on around them today has given rise to the current expression, "Two worlds," with all its ominous overtones.

Purpose of the Study. The purpose of this study is to make possible a better understanding of the issues involved in this mid-twentieth century struggle between the forces of individualism and the forces of collectivism by an investigation

of the nature of Fabian Socialism. Fabian Socialism was chosen because it is believed that it represents a middle road between the extremes of the opposing sides and attempts to use something of what is found in each. It is, therefore, a synthesis and affords a desirable approach to these two concepts .

Plan of the Study. The plan of the present study is broadly to survey the whole of Fabian Socialism beginning with an historical sketch of the Society and some mention of its leading members. This, plus a discussion of the aims and methods of the Fabians constitutes the first chapter. The second chapter is devoted to an analysis of the essentials of Fabian Socialism, its premises, theories, and proposals in the social, economic, and political spheres. Next the Fabian Society is considered in its historical context with emphasis on its interaction with other Socialist societies of its time and in particular with the trade union movement and the development of the British Labor Party. Lastly, our attention is turned to the influence of Fabian Socialism on the present Labor Government in England to determine its nature and extent and its significance in the unfolding of British history.

Sources. The sources for such a study are not voluminous. The principle original sources are the publications of the Fabian Society itself. Included in these are the Fabian Essays in Socialism by George Bernard Shaw and six other members of the Society's executive committee in which the basic

principles are set forth; the Fabian Tracts, now numbering more than two hundred and fifty, in which the Fabian position on specific matters is lucidly explained for ordinary readers; the Annual Reports of the Fabian Society; and the Fabian News, a news-letter for members of the Society issued monthly. Other original sources more or less germane to the subject of Fabian Socialism can be found in the voluminous writings of the members of the Society at all stages of its existence. The names first to come to mind in this connection are those of George Bernard Shaw (including his plays), Sidney and Beatice Webb, G. D. H. Cole, Harold Laski, J. Ramsay MacDonald, Graha m Wallas, C. R. Attlee, and many others.

Secondary source material is scattered. There are only two books devoted specifically to this subject. One is the History of the Fabian Society by Edward R. Pease, secretary to the Society for twenty-five years, and the other is Fabian Socialism by G. D. H. Cole. The bulk of the secondary matter is to be found in commentaries on Fabian Socialism in books on British Socialism and trade unionism, outstanding among which is Max Beer's two volume History of British Socialism, biographies and auto-biographies of leading Fabians, and in books dealing with collectivist thought in general, such as Harry Laidler's Social-Economic Movements, and Political Thought in England from Herbert Spencer to the Present Day, by Ernest Barker.

CHAPTER II

THE FABIAN SOCIETY

1. Early History

The Fellowship of the New Life. The first meeting of the Fabian Society took place at the lodgings of Edward R. Pease, its longtime secretary, on October 24th, 1883, in London. The people gathered together that evening were intent upon founding a society dedicated to the principles of Vita Nuova, or the Fellowship of the New Life, as preached by its prophet, Thomas Davidson. Davidson was a Scotsman of humble origin whose ethical socialism was of the Utopian, Brook Farm, phalanstery variety which looked for its fulfillment to the efforts of individuals toward spiritual and moral perfection. They did not then call themselves Fabians and indeed what the Society was later to become under this name was far removed from the intentions of this little group of pioneers.[1]

Meetings were thereafter held fortnightly, a practice which has been maintained ever since with the exception of summer months. At the meeting on November 23rd a resolution was carried which stated:

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1 Edward R. Pease, The History of the Fabian Society. (London: Published by the Fabian Society and Geo. Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1925) pp. 26ff.

"The members of the Society assert that the competitive system assures the happiness and comfort of the few at the expense of the suffering of the many and that the Society must be reconstituted in such a manner as to secure the general welfare and happiness.[2]"

This resolution marked the beginning of a rift in the group as the minority did not think that sufficient stress had been placed on spiritual considerations and that too much had been placed on economic considerations. The rift widened until on January 4th, 1884, the Fabian Society as we know it was born.

Significance of the Word "Fabian." At the meeting of January 4th it was resolved that the Society should be called the Fabian Society after the Roman general Quintus Fabius Maximus, nicknamed "Cunctator" (The Delayer). Consequently the Society took as their motto these words:

"For the right moment you must wait, as Fabius did; but when the right moment comes you must strike hard or your waiting will have been in vain and fruitless."[3]

Critics have since pointed out many times that asa matter of historical fact Fabius never did strike hard and that it was actually Hannibal who won the Carthaginian War by carrying the fight into enemy territory. From this it can be gathered that if the socialists keep putting off the battle against capitalism it is not very likely that it will ever achieve its goal.[4]

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2 Ibid., p. 32.

3 G. D. H. Cole, The Fabian Society: Past and Present. Tract Series #258 (pamphlet), Pub. by the Fabian Society, 1942.

4 John F. Underwood, "Fabian Socialism," Canadian Forum,

The tactics of Fabius, therefore, were to be the watchword of the Society. Also it was resolved that evening that the Society should not at that time pledge itself to any more definite basis of agreement than that of the resolution quoted above regarding the competitive system of society. It was further resolved that the Society should

> ". . . (a) Hold meetings for discussion, the reading of papers, the hearing of reports, etc.
> (b) Delegate some of its members to attend meetings held on social subjects, debates at Workmen's Clubs, etc., in order that such members may in the first place report to the Society on the proceedings, and in the second place put forward, as occasion serves, the views of the Society.
> (c) Take measures in other ways, as, for example, the collection of articles from current literature, to obtain information on all contemporary social movements and social needs."[5]

With these resolutions the group split. Those wishing to keep to the idea of spiritual regeneration remained as the Fellowship of the New Life while those who thought that economic considerations were of more importance in the "reconstruction of society" made up the new group. Although the two societies continued on they had really little in common intellectually.[6]

The First Tracts. AT these early meetings there were only two men who were later to achieve prominence. They were

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XXVI, No. 302, March, 1946.

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5 Archibald Henderson, Bernard Shaw: Playboy and Prophet. (N.Y. & London: D. Appleton & Co., 1932) p. 141.

6 The Fellowship remained small and continued for about fifteen years. It published a magazine, Seedtime, which lasted from July, 1889 until February, 1898 to which Havelock Ellis and his wife contributed. Ramsay MacDonald was a noted member.

H. H. Champion who became a well-known leader of British Socialism in connection with the Social Democratic Federation, and H. Havelock Ellis whose writings have since made him famous.[7] It was not until September 5th 1885 that a third great name was connected with the Society, that of George Bernard Shaw, then a young man and completely unknown. But his genius was turned early to the good of the Society with his writing of Fabian Tract No. 2.

Tract No. 1 had been published in April. It was a four page leaflet entitled, "Why Are the Many Poor?", and was a scathing attack on the idle rich. However, although it points out an evil it makes no suggestion for a remedy and is in no sense distinguished by Fabian characteristics. The great men who were to make the reputation of the Society had not yet discovered it. What characterized the Society in those very early months was a great lack of self-confidence for a group of revolutionaries who had set out to rebuild society and really knew very little about how to go about it.[8]

But Shaw's tract, No. 2, was in the form of a manifesto containing a number of bold statements delivered in the Shavian fashion summing up to a very radical but not too sound view of economics. Among them, the most famous are perhaps "that under

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[7] Ellis was primarily a man of scientific bent, his field being medicine. He has won world-wide recognition for his works on the physiology and psychology of sex and love. He was sympathetic to the Fabians but having no political interests he remained with the original group until he realized its limitations and in consequence his active participation

existing circumstances wealth cannot be enjoyed without dishonor or foregone without misery" and "that a life interest in the Land and Capital of the nation is the birthright of every individual born within its confines and that acess to this birthright should not depend upon the will of any private person other than the person seeking it."[9] Mr. Pease's comment on this early tract of the Society is indicative of how far the Society has progressed since those initial years of fuzzy radicalism

> "The old radical prejudice in favour of direct taxation, so that the State may never handle a penny not wrung from the reluctant and acutely conscious taxpayer, the doctrinaire objection to state monopolies, and the modern view that municipal enterprises had better be carried on at the cost price, are somewhat inconsistently commingled with the advocacy of universal state competition in industry. It may be further noticed that we were as yet unconscious of the claims and aims of the working people. Our manifesto covered w wide field, but it nowhere touched Co-operation or Trade Unionism, wages or hours of labor. We were still playing with abstractions, Land and Capital, Industry and Competition, the Individual and the State."[10]

Composition of the Society. The Fabian Society is and has always been essentially a middle-class organization, drawing its membership chiefly from this strata of society. Mostly its members were young men of university education but there were members in all age groups of both sexes. It is interest-

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gradually diminished and finally ceased. (Havelock Ellis, My Life. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1939. p. 203.)

8 Pease, op. cit., p. 40.

9 Henderson, op. cit., pp. 156f. This tract is now out of print and is rare and difficult to find in compilations of Fabian Tracts. Henderson quotes it in full.

10 Pease, op. cit., pp. 43f.

ing to note what Shaw, the sparkplug of the Society in those days, has to say regarding the types of people it attracted during those initial years. Tract No. 4, entitled The Fabian Society: Its Early History, was originally a paper read by Shaw at a conference of the London and Provincial Fabian Societies wherein he claimed that the Fabians were at the outset as radical, as insurrectionist, as anarchist and anti-constitutionalist as any of the other Socialist societies. Why then, if they so ardently aspired to the destruction of the present order, did they not join one of the many societies which were confidently planning and plotting the immediate accomplishment of this end? Because, says Shaw, the Fabians were entirely middle-class and had no common grounds with the working-class proletarians. The leaders of the Fabians did have connections with the radical Socialist organizations. Shaw, for instance, held membership in, and attended the meetins of the Social Democratic Federation, England's Marxist organization under the direction of H. M. Hyndman. In their turn, the proletarians did not join the Fabian Society, which held its meetings at the ultra respectable, if not swank, Willis's Rooms. But the important factor lay in the temperament and character of the Fabians who were more given to quiet study, investigation, and discussion than they were to mass meetings, parades, and soapbox oratory.

"However, as I have said, in 1885 our differences were latent and instinctive; and we denounced the capitalists

as thieves at the Industrail Remuneration Conference, and, among ourselves, talked revolution, anarchy, labor-notes versus passbooks, and all the rest of it, on the tacit assumption that the object of our campaign with its watchwords, 'Educate, Agitate, Organize,' was to bring about a tremendous smashup of society, to be succeeded by complete Socialism. And this meant that we had no true practical understanding of existing Society or Socialism."

He goes on to say that despite this enthusiasm for the demolition of the status quo

". . . we contracted the invaluable habit at this period of freely laughing at ourselves which has always distinguished us, and which has saved us from becoming hampered by the gushing enthusiasts who mistake their own emotions for public movements. From the first such people fled after one glance at us, declaring that we were not serious. Our preference for practical suggestions and criticisms, and our impatience of all general expressions of sympathy with working-class aspirations, not to mention our way of chaffing our opponents in preference to denouncing them as enemies of the human race, repelled from us some eloquent and warm-hearted Socialists, to whom it seemed calous and cynical to be even commonly self-possessed in the presence of the sufferings upon which Socialists make war."[11]

The "Tory Gold" Incident and After. Among the occurrences which were of importance to the Socialist movement in the years 1885 to 1887 was what is known to Fabians as "Tory Gold at the 1885 Election." Mr. Shaw's recounting of this incident is illustrative of the Fabian attitude toward certain political practices. In the 1885 election the Social Democratic Federation (S.D.F.) decided to give a try to parliamentary methods by running two candidates in London who came through with twenty-seven and thirty-two votes respectively. Sad as were the results, it was sadder still in that the S.D.F. had

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11 Tract No. 4, The Fabian Society: Its Early History by G. B. Shaw. p. 4.

made no secret of the fact that its campaign expenses had been paid by the Tories in an effort to split the vote of the Liberal Party, so that "it is hard to say which cut the more foolish figure, the Tories who had spent their money for nothing, or the Socialists who had sacrificed their reputation for worse than nothing."[12]

Many Socialists of the time had nothing but censure for the takingof the tainted money to further the righteous cause and even the Fabians passed a resolution denouncing the S.D.F. for doing so. But seven years later in 1892, Shaw was defending the act as no more odious than the taking of Liberal Party money for the same purpose. Both parties were inimical to the interests and aims of Socialists and it must necessarily be the statesmanship of Socialists for a long time to come to take "advantage of the party dissentions between Un-socialists." For although by 1892 the Liberal party had become definitely solicitous to Labour candidates and offered them certain assistances, in 1885 one was as bad as the other. The criticism of the act is therefore not for having taken Tory money as opposed to Liberal money, but to have ventured any candidates into the field at all. It was "a huge mistake in tactics." Previously, the S.D.F. and other Socialists had succeeded in building up in the popular mind a formidable picture of Socialism in England. Were this not so the Tories would never have thought to attempt to use them as part of their political tactics. But

12 Loc. cit.

immediately after the affair there was a marked falling off from the Federation. Everyone now knew that the Socialists were in nowise a force to be reckoned with and those Socialists who had engineered the plan quit in disgust while others, who had never had any faith in parliamentary proceedures anyway, were even more thoroughly convinced of their correctness.[13]

The years 1886 and 1887 wer years of action on the British political and economic scene. The business slump of those years greatly increased the number of unemployed who were much sought after by the radical and Socialist groups. The S.D.F. and the Socialist League, an anarchist body formed by a fission within the ranks of the S.D.F., were holding mass meetings and rallies and processionsof the unemployed to the churches of the rich on Sunday mornings. Some of the activities led to altercations with the police wherein some windows were broken and some of the leaders were tried for sedition, among whom were Hyndaman, Champion, Williams, and Burns, the last of whom was to become a member of the cabinet in 1906. These men were acquitted but the public was treated to a taste of radical Socialism which produced such consternation in certain quarters as to increase by severalfold the contributions to the fund for the poor within the next few weeks.[14]

The next event of importance in the life of the Fabian Society was the conference they sponsored in 1886.

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13 Ibid., p. 7.
14 Ibid., p. 13.

"We signalized our repudiation of political sectarianism in June 1886, by inviting the Radicals, the Secularists, and anyone else who would come, to a great conference . . . dealing with the Nationalization of Land and Capital. It fully established the fact that we had nothing immediately practical to impart to the Radicals and they had nothing to impart to us. . . . fifty-three societies sent delegates; . . . and the discussions were kept going for three afternoons and three evenings, Eighteen papers were read, two of them by members of Parliament, and most of the rest by well -known people. . . . Yet all that can be said for it (the conference) is that it made us known to the radical clubs and proved that we were able to manage a conference in a business-like way. It also, by the way showed off our pretty prospectus with the design by Crance at the top, our stylish-looking blood-red invitations cards, and other little smartnesses on which we then prided ourselves. We used to be plentifully sneered at as fops and arm-chair Socialists for our attention to these details; but I think it was by no means the least of our merits that we always, as far as our means permitted, tried to make our printed documents as handsome as possible, and did our best to destroy the association between revolutionary literature and slovenly printing on paper that iis nasty without being cheap."[15]

The Hampstead Historical Society. The Fabians were at first quite ignorant of the systematic study of economics. Having been brought together by the medium of the Fellowship of the New Life which was more a matter of philosophy and ethics, their knowledge of economics was confined to broad generalizations, more philosophic and moral than economic, about the condition of society and some of the possible remedies in vague outline. But it was not long before they found that an association whose ultimate aim was to be the reconstruction of society in accordance with the highest

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15 Pease, op. cit., p. 49.

moral possibiliteis and whose chief obstacle was the competitive system needed more than an aim. Its members would need to know enough about thsi competitive system not only to point out its faults but to have something concrete to replace every pinnion knocked out from under it. As a result of their consciousness of inadequacy they deliberately set out to study economics. A group of the more avid ones founded a little group for the reading of Marx's Capital and Proudhon. TheYmet in Hampstead first in private homes then later in the Hampstead Public Library.and so called thier group the Hampstead Historical Society. It was a small mutual improvement group for the reading and digesting of some of the leading economists and it eventually turned into a systematic class in history in which the members took turns in being the professor. The leading lights of the Society were Shaw, Webb, Olivier, and Wallas plus Bland and Clarke. Once every two weeks for a number of years these men attended its meetings. It was here that Fabian Socialism got its firm grounding in economic theory. It was here that these Fabians acquired what enabled them in the years following to become the most formidable controversialists at the tiny meetings, workmen's debates, and insignificant little conferences and gatherings that they attended most religiously in all parts of London.[16]

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16 Henderson, op. cit., pp. 163-167.

2. Aims and Objects.

It is the purpose of this division of the study to indicate the broad ends toward which Fabian Socialism is directed. It is intended to point out the ultimate objects to which the Fabians subordinated all considerations of general policy or immediate activity, and to the attainment of which all policies were molded and activities were directed. The aims and objects of Fabian Socialism have to do with the ultimate reasons for the existence of the Fabian Society, the most inclusive definition of which is found in the expression, "the reconstitution of society along moral lines."

As has already been cited, the bent of the Fabians from the beginning was toward a righting of condition in the realm of economics in the direction of a more equal distribution of wealth and welfare in society in general.and in England in particular. A good, concise summary of the "mission" of the Fabians is given to us by Sahw in Tract No. 70.

> "The object of the Fabian Society is to pursuade the English people to make their political constitutions thoroughly democratic and so to socialise their industries as to make the livlihood of the people entirely independent to private capitalism."[17]

The Fabian "Basis". For the complete definition of the aims and objects for which the Fabian Society is estab-

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[17] Tract No. 70: Report of Fabian Policy by G. B. Shaw, 1896. p. 3.

lished recourse is best had to the "Basis." The Basis is a statement of the basic aims toward which Fabians must agree to direct their efforts. It has sometimes been misinterpreted as a confession of faith or a statement of the whole content and meaning of Socialism. It is, however, only "a test of admission, "a minimum basis of agreement" the signing of which is required of any who wish to have a part in the control of a society which has set out "to reconstruct our social system."[18]

A discussion of the aims of the Fabians would not be complete without some knowledge of the Basis and therefore it is herewith quoted in full.

> "The Fabian Society consists of Socialists.
> "It therefore aims at the reorganization of Society by the emancipation of Land and Industrial Capital from individual and class ownership, and the vesting of them in the community for the general benefit. In this way only can the natural and acquired advantages of the country be equitably shared by the whole people.
>
> "The Society accordingly works for the extinction of private property in Land and of the consequent individual appropriation, in the form of rent, of the price paid for permission to use the earth, as well as for the advantages of superior soils and sites.
>
> "The Society, further, works for the transfer to the community of the administration of such industrial Capital as can be conveniently managed socially. For, owing to the monopoly of the means of production in the past, industrial invention and the transformation of surplus income into Capital have mainly enriched the proprietary class, the worker being now dependent on that class for leave to earn a living.

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18 Pease, op. cit., p. 72.

"If these measures be carried out without compensation (though not without such relief to expropriated individuals as may seem fit to the community), Rent and Interest will be added to the reward of labour, the idle class now living on the labour of others will necessarily disappear, and practical equality of opportunity will be maintained by the spontaneous action of economic forces with much less interference with personal liberty than the present system entails.

"For the attainment of these ends the Fabian Society looks to the spread of Socialist opinions, and the social and political changes consequent thereon, *including the establishment of equal citizenship for men and women.*[1] It seeks to achieve these ends by the general dissemination of knowledge as to the relation between the individual and society in its economic, ethical, and political aspects.[19]

Over the course of the years it was generally recognized that the Basis needed an overhauling but the acute differences of opinion among the members and the failure to agree as to how this should be done left the Basis intact until long after it was outmoded in the views of most Fabians. However, in 1919 some changes were finally agreed upon and drawn up by Mr. Sidney Webb.[20] The third paragraph was changed to read:

The Society accordingly works for the extinction of private property in land, with equitabel consideration of established expectations, and due provision as to the tenure of the home and the homestead; for the transfer to the community, by constitutional methods, of all such industries as can be conducted socially; and for the establishment, as the governing consideration in the regulation of production, distribution and service, of the common good instead of private profit.[21]

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1 The words in italics were added in 1907 as a result of agitation by the universal suffragists within the Society.

19 Pease, op. cit., Appendix II, p. 284.

20 Ibid., p. 259.

21 Ibid., p. 260.

In this revision can be detected the greater care for the effects of socialization on the individual by the provision for remuneration in accordance with "established expectations". This means that the shock of socialization will be somewhat cushioned. The landowner will be reimbursed in proportion to the size and productivity,i.e. the value of his holdings. To some members of the society such a provision undoubtedly meant a doctrinal retreat while to most it must have signified a greater maturity of the Society. This is also bourne out in the reference to the sacredness of private property in such things as the home, and the emphasis on constitutionality in the transfer to the new order.

3. Policy and Procedure.

Under this division of the study the management and strategy of the Fabian campaign for the attainment of its aims will be analyzed. Policy and procedure have to do with the nature of the approach to the aims which in turn determine the types of tactics and activities to be utilized.[22]

By 1886 the Fabian Society was fully constituted but it was yet a very small and quite obscure body. The Society

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22 For instance, as will be seen later, the aims of the Fabian Society and the S.D.F. were the same, the reconstruction of society. Their policies differed. That of the F. S. was investigation and education. That of the S.D.F. was agitation and revolution. Thus, their tactics and activities differed. Those of the Fabians were pamphleteering and lecturing while those of the S.D.F. were mass-meetings, parades, and strikes.

still met, as a rule, at the house of one or other of its members, and to the founders, who numbered only about twenty, approximately sixty-seven new members had been added by June, 1886. In these years were laid the foundations of policy which have been maintained, generally speaking, ever since.

Education v. Political Action. To begin with, the Fabians have never attempted to make their Society the focal rallying point for a mass movement or a party or in any way to build an organization for the destruction of the capitalist system. On this matter Pease has this to say:[23]

> "The Social Democrats of those days asserted that unquestioning belief in every dogma attributed to Marx was essential to social salvation, and that its only way was revolution, by which they meant, not the compleat transformation of society, but its transformation by rifles and barricades; they were convinced that a successful repitition of the Commune of Paris was the only method by which their policy could prevail. The Fabians realized from the first that no such revolution was likely to take place, and that constant talk about it was the worst possible way to commend Socialism to t the British working class. And indeed a few years later it was necessary to establish a new working-class Socialist Society, the Independent Labor Party, in order to get clear both of the tradition of revolutionary violence and of the vain repetition of Marxian formulas. If the smaller society had merged itself in the popular m movement, its criticism, necessary, as it proved to be, to the success of Socialism in England, would have been voted down, and its critics either silenced or expelled."

In a footnote, Pease prints a paragraph by Shaw which takes exception to the foregoing views of Pease.

> "I think this is wrong, because the Fabians were at first as bellicose as the others, and Marx had been under no delusion as to the Commune and did not bequeath

23 Pease, op. cit., pp. 61f.

> a tradition of its repetition. Bakunin was as popular a leader as Marx. Many of us--Bland and Keddell among others--were members of the S.D.F., and I was constantly speaking for the S.D.F. and the (Socialist) League. We did not keep ourselves to ourselves; we aided the working-class organizations in every way; and they were jolly glad to have us. In fact the main difference between us was that we worked for everybody (permeation) and they worked for their own societies only. The real reasonthat we segregated for purposes of thought and study was that the workers could not go our pace or stand our social habits. Hyndman and Morris and Helen Taylor were too old for us; they were between forty and fifty when we were between twenty and thirty."

In this conflict of opinions there is some truth on both sides. Shaw is right in that the difference in social habits and temperament kept the Fabians relatively separate from other socialist groups at the very beginning. Shaw is speaking for himself and some of the other leaders of the Fabian Society more than the general run of it when he speaks of the interrelation and mutual assistance between their leaders. But although the Fabians may have been "as bellicose as the others" at first, Pease is right in that the distinctive evolutionary attitude of the Fabians toward social change was at a very early date noticeable among the members and added to the other differences between them and their more radical fellows.

It has never been the policy of the Fabians to try to start a mass movement or to claim to represent any particular elements in the population. They have been content to work with and assist other organizations and movements with their special abilities but there they have drawn the line.

Further in this regard Shaw continues in his Early History--

> "We have never advanced the smallest pretension to represent the working classes of this country. No such absurdity as a candidate nominated by the Fabian Society alone has ever appeared in London, though we flatter ourselves that a candidate finds it no disadvantage to be a Fabian."[24]

The Fabian Parliamentary League. Perhaps the best statement on Fabian policy in regard to political action can be found in the constitution of the now defunct Fabian Parliamentary League. There was some difference of opinion in the early stages of the Society as to the emphasis to be placed on political activity as opposed to education of the people in Socialism. The two positions are illustrated by a resolution posed at a meeting in September, 1886 which stated

> "That it is advisable that Socialists should organize themselves as a political party for the purpose of transfering in to the hands of the whole community full control over the soil and the means of production and distribution of wealth."

A rider to this resolution represented the contrasting viewpoint--

> "But whereas the first duty of Socialists is to educate the people to understand what their present position is and what their future might be, and to keep the principle of Socialism steadily before them; and whereas no parliamentary party can exist without compromise and concession, which would hinder that education and obscure those principles, it would be a false step for the Socialists to attempt to take part in the Parliamentary contest."[25]

That the debate which followed on these issues was a heated one is attested to by the secretary's note in the

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24 Tract No. 41: The Fabian Society: What it has done and how it has done it by G. B. Shaw. p. 23.

minutes of the meeting: "Subsequently to the meeting, the secretary received notice from the manager of Anderton's Hotel that the Society could not be accomodated there for any further meetings."

The schism within the group was finally settled by the formation of the Fabian Parliamentary League which the members could join if they liked. The League functioned for a while but soon faded into a Political Committee of the Society, and then merged gradually into the general body. The principles set forth in its constitution, are now the accepted policy of the Fabian Society and which have made it an outstanding pioneer in the history of world Socialism. The constitution is herewith quoted in part:

> "The League will take active part in all general and local elections. Until a fitting opportunity arises for putting forward Socialists candidates to form the nucleus of a Socialist party in Parliament, it will confine itself to supporting those candidates who will go furthest in the direstion of Socialism. It will not ally itself absolutely with anpolitcal party; it will jealously avoid being made use of for political purposes; and it will be guided in its action by the character, record, and pledges of the candidates before the constituencies. In Municipal, School Board, and Vestry and other local elections, the League will, as it finds itself strong enough, run candidates of its own, and by placing trustworty Socialists on local representative bodies it will endeavor to secure the recognition of the Socialist principle in all the details of local government."[25]

Thus we see that Fabian policy in regard to political action was one of "deliberate possibilism." It would

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25 Pease, op. cit., pp. 68f.

steer a course of its own directed toward the attainment of that type of Socialism which it thought was the inevitable end of social evolution at any rate, but which might be hastened by the possible influence of their activities. To sum it we cite the words of an outsider, Brougham Villiers, in The Socialist Movement in England.

> "The Fabian Society has never been a fighting organization; its work has ever been educational and that in two ways. From within, the Society has striven to educate the socialist movement itself into harmony with English political methods; while it has attempted to convert the outside world, not so much to the belief in Socialism, as to the socialistic treatment of evey individual problem of contemporary politics."[26]

"Permeation." Before leaving the subject of Fabian policy a word must be said about thier famous principle of "permeation." This word is "writ large" in the annals and publications of the Fabian Society. Permeation refers to their practice of joing or participating in the work of any and all organizations in which Fabian work can be done. To the Fabian, all associations and movements contain the germs of Socialism no matter how unsympathetic may be its leaders to the idea of Socialism. [27] Therefore there was no restriction on the political activiteis of the members of the Fabian Society. Once they had pledged themselves to the basis of the Society they were free to work in whatever fashion or through whatever groups were most congenial or were

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26 Brougham Villiers, The Socialist Movement in England (T. Fisher Unwin, London, Leipsic; 1908) p. 201.

thought by them to afford the greatest opportunity for the advancement of socialistic principles. They could be Marxist S.D.F.-ers, or members of the Liberal or Tory parties, and so much the better if they were, as it gave them increased opportunity to make known their views and works for Fabian aims.

The Alliance with Labor. A major change in policy occurred after the founding of the Labor Party. In the section of the constitution of the Parliamentary League quoted above[27] it is laid down that the Society "will not ally itself absolutely with any political party." Acompletely new section inserted in the Basis is a good summary of the later policy of the Fabians both in regard to political action and education.

> "The Society is a constituent of the Labour Party and of the International Socialist Congress; but it takes part freely in all constitutional movements, social economic, and political, which can be guided towards its own objects. Its direct business is (a) the propaganda of Socialism in its application to current proplems; (b) investigation and idscovery in social, industrial, political and economic relations; (c) the working out of Socialist principles in legislation and administrative reconstruction; (d) the publication of the results of its investigations and their practical lessons.
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> "The Society, believing in equal citizenship of men and women in the fullest sense, is open to persons irrespective of sex, race, or creed, who commit themselves to its aims and purposes as stated above, and undertake to promote its work."[28]

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27 See page 21.
28 Pease, op. cit., p. 260.

It must be remembered that at the time of the Parliamentary League there was no Labor Party in existence, and that in the first twenty years of the century the Fabians had to a remarkable degree secceeded in permeating the trade union movement with their ideas and this, coupled with the amazing growth of the Labor Party in these years made that party a logical extension of Fabianism. Also it must be remembered that Fabian policy was one of "deliberate possibilism" which left them relatively free to alter their course and change and change their tactics in accordance with unforseen developments.

4. Tactics and Activities.

The Publication of Tracts. The most outstanding activity of the Fabians was the publication of pamphlets, some of which have already been mentioned. Since the first tract appeared on the stands of London in April, 1884 there has been a steady stream of these little books written by various Fabians, to come off the presses. The Society has an elected pamphlet committee which reviews work submitted by the members of the Society, edits it, and prepares it for publication. These tracts deal with everything from Socialism in general to the Fabian position on very specific issues such as bills before Parliament, how to derive fullest advantages from laws passed, information and figures relative to particular problems, and how to think socialistically on

hundreds of other problems directly affecting the welfare of the ordinary people of England. A crossection of the type subjects handled in these tracts is afforded by a list of those published in the years 1896.[29] These tracts sold very inexpensively, sometimes as low as a penny or two, and were easily within the reach of the poorest of people.

Tract No.

67. Women and the Factory Acts. 16pp. Mrs. Sidney Webb.
68. The Tenant's Sanitary Catechism. 4pp. Arthur Hickmott.
69. The Difficulties of Individualism. 20pp. S. Webb.
70. Report on Fabian Policy. 16pp. G. Shaw.
71. The (London) Tenants Sanitary Catechism. 4pp. Miss Grove.
72. The Moral Aspects of Socialism. 24pp. Sidney Ball.
73. The Case for State Pensions in Old Age. 16pp. George Turner.
74. The State and Its Functions in New Zealand. 16pp. The Hon. W. P. Reeves (not a member).

The influence of some of the Fabian tracts was well out of propertion to that of most radical tracts such as are found on the stands of all great cities. S. F. Markham,[30] commenting on Fabian Tract No. 5 called Facts for Socialists, which was an estimate of the manual worker's share of the national income, says that it was easily the most famous English Socialist tract, running through twelve editions. There was, however, no novelty about collecting facts purported to undermine the capitalist system. Something really new in pamphleteering came with the publication of Facts for Londoners (1889), which was a complete statistical analysis of

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29 Ibid., p. 292.

30 S. F. Markham, A History of Socialism (London: A. & C. Black, Ltd., 1930) p. 119.

London institutions, with specific proposals for improving them. This marked a new step in Socialist thought processes. In fact it set a precedent for which Fabian tracts became famous, namely, the constructive criticism which not only destroys but furnishes a positive, well-thought-out remedy. Fabian tracts had something to offer. In a country where many of the utilities were already publicly owned the Fabians came forward with proposals to expand public ownership and backed them up with hard facts and sound reasoning. It is no wonder that they soon had established a name for themselves which has not lost its prominence through the years.[31]

The Fabian "Essays." The most important singel publication in the history of the Fabian Society was a group of essays entitled Fabian Essays in Socialism, first published in 1889. These essays were the work of seven exceptional people most of whom were at a later date to achieve fame either in the literary field or in politics. The book is a coherent, well-rounded exposition of the theoretical side of Fabian Socialism. Bernard Shaw was the editor and with the aid of Sidney Webb revised the work of the other authors to give it a style far more pleasing than that of most socialist works. In one month the whole edition of 1000 copies was sold. After that it went through many more editions until some 46,000 copies had been sold and many more in

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31 Loc. cit.

foreign editions and translations.[32]

"Fabian Essays" made the case fro Socialism so plain that anyone could understand it. It did not resort to the speculations of some German philosopher but rather it based its reasoning on the obvious evolution of society that anyone who thinks can discern. It drew heavily from the accepted British thinking on economics. It pictured Socialism as something that could come about through the ordinary processes of government that were traditional to the British people. It proved that Socialism was the an inevitable consequence of the industrial revolution and was clearly the next step in the evolution of the country. The "Essays" appeared at a time when Socialism was presented to the people by the more prominent S.D.F. as a complete revolutionary propostion. Up to 1890 Socialism in England and elsewhere had been generally regarded as insurrectionary, dogmatic, utopian, and almost incomprehensible. It is not difficult to understand then, why a book so different in tone from the usual Socialist canting should meet with such favor.[33]

Lecturing. Besides the tracts and the "Essays" the Fabians indulged in numerous other activities most effective of which was their lecturing. This program of lecturing became as much a part of Fabian tactics as the publication of tracts. Members of the Society had specific lectures which

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32 Pease, op. cit.,pp. 86ff.
33 Ibid., p. 90.

they could be booked to give to any group of outsiders who might wish to hear a Fabian talk on some specific subject. Sidney Webb was always fond of saying that the activity of the Fabian Society was the sum tatal of the activities of its members. As an example ofr the work done along this line by the Fabians the figures in his report of the Lecture Committee of 1889 are reproduced. A lecture list of thirty-three names was made up and reports by thirty-one lecturers indicated that 721 lectures had been made in the course of the years. That means there were almost two lectures a day on an average over the year. Six courses of lectures on economics accounted for fifty-two of these. By special request the "Essays" series of lectures were delivired at King's College, Cambbridge and also at Leicester. The other lectures were delivered at London Radical Working Men's Clubs, then and for some years later a more important factor in politics than they were after the turn of the century.[34]

Shaw, in Tract No. 41 inder the sub-title "How to Train for Public Life," gives some very interesting accounts of his early activities in connection with the Society and how he, as typical of many of the others, immersed himself in the Fabian lecture work.

> Every Sunday I lectured on some subject which I wanted to teach myself; and it was not until I had come to the point of being able to deliver separate lectures, without notes, on Rent, Interest, Profits, Wages, Tory-

34 Ibid., p. 77.

ism, Liberalism, Socialism, Communism, Anarchism, Trade-Unionism, Co-operation, Democracy, the Division of Society in to Classes, and the Suitability of Human Nature to Systems of Just Distribution, that I was able to handle Social-Democracy as it must be handled before it can be preached in such a way as to be presented to every sort of man form his own particualr point of view. In old lecture lists you will find my name down for twelve lectures or so. . . . I do not hesitate to say that all our best lecturers have two or three old lectures at the back of every single point in their best new speeches; and this means that they have spent a certain number of years plodding away at footling little meetings and dull discussions, doggedly placing these before all private engagements, hwoever tempting. A man's Socialistic acquisitiveness must be keen enough to actually make him prefer spending two or three nights a week in speaking and debating, or in picking up social information even in the most dingy and scrappy way, to going to the theatre, or dancing and drinking, or even sweethearting--unless, of course, his daily work is of such a nature as to be in itself a training for political life; and that, we know, is the case with very few of us indeed. It is at such lecturing and debating work, and on squalid little committees and ridiculous little delegations to conferences of the three tailors of Tooley Street, with perhaps a deputation to the mayor thrown in once in a blue moon or so, that the ordinary Fabian workman or clerk must qualify for his future seat on the town council, the School Board, or perhaps in the Cabinet.[35]

Fabian lecturers were thus enlightening the public constantly on current issues and the principles of Socialism.

"Thus, although the Fabian Society acquired little public recognition, and was not mentioned in The Times until 1907, its influence was widely felt where its name was unknown. The Education Act of 1902 embodied eleven out of thirteen amendments advocated by the Society."[36]

The "Gas and Water Socialists." Another of the

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35 Tract No. 41, 1892, by G. Bernard Shaw.

36 Helen Merrill Lynd, England in the Eighteen-Eighties (London, N. Y., Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1945) p. 404.

activities of the Fabians to make their influence felt was the seeking of political office. Many of their number got themselves elected to local offices where they had an opportunity to exert greater influence. One of the chief outlets to their talents in this direction was the London County Council. This is the governing unit for the whole of greater London and is a very important body in English politics.

> "The first definite chance for the Fabians to hold political office came with the London County Council elections of 1889. The radical interests in London made the Fabian pamphlet The London Program the progressive platform of the campaign. In the second County Councilelection seven Fabians were candidate and four were elected; in the election of 1892 the Progressives swamped the Conservatives at the polls and maintained their dominance almost uninterruptedly until 1907. And the Progressives were either Fabians or or expressed Fabian principles."[37]

> "Webb was made chairman of the Technical Education Board which at that time had control of all public education, except elementary, in the country. Under his chairmanship much was accomplished in bringing secondary and university education within the reach of the working people of London."[38]

This interest in problems of local concern such as street railways, gas works, school systems, school-childrens' food, parish and district councils, gained for them the derisive nomer of "gas and water" Socialists. However, the addiction to things local is a praisworthy part of the Fabian theory in as much as government on the local level is much

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37 Loc. cit.,

38 Earl R. Sikes, Contemporary Economic Systems (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1940)pp. 113f.

closer to the people and therefore capable of doing much in their benefit; not only that, but it was politically sagacious in that it spread the consciousness of public ownership, enabled the Fabians to get their views before the prople in election campaigns, and slowly laid the basis for the future demands by the British people for the democratic change of government which the Fabians had been urging since the 1880's.

The Fabian Summer School. Finally may be mentioned the Summer School sponsored and directed by the Fabian Society for the use of any who may be interested in furthering their knowledge of Fabianism while at the same time enjoying a vacation in Surrey, Yorkshire, or South Wales, depending on where the school is held. These Schools have been popular and successful since their founding in 1907.

5. Organization.

The organization of the Fabian Society is simple. It is headed by an executive committee composed of fifteen members elected by the voting membership. The requirements for membership and voting privileges are merely the signing of the Basis and the payment of the small dues which carry with them a subscription to the Society's monthly Fabian News, a four-page sheet which keeps the members informed both of the activities of the Society and also of its mem-

bers. The Executive Committee is charge with the running of the organization and the selection of the various committees.

The "Provincial Societies." Although not a definite part of the organization of the Fabian Society, it might be well to mention the "provincial societies" which sprang up after the publication of the "Essays." These groups do not appear to have been very stable and were composed mostly of workmen who were not suited to the type of activity engaged in by the original group in London. These groups were welcomed by the parent Society and encouraged in every way but there was no attempt by the London group to control these newcomers. They had absolute autonomy in all matters. However, most of these societies showed little vigor after the initial enthusiasm and when the Independent Labor Party was formed it absorbed most of them into its realm of activities.

The only others were the University Fabian Societies formed at most of the leading Universities. These associations fluctuated in activity with the change in the student bodies. In a few cases their members after graduation became leaders in the original Society. Most of them, however, ceased their activity upon graduation or moved to localities where they were out of touch with the important Fabian activities.[39]

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39 Pease, op. cit., pp. 100-102.

6. Some Leading Fabians.

It has often been a cause of wonder that a small group of people such as the Fabians were, who set out on the accomplishment of such exalted aims as the Fabians did, should have achieved such remarkable success as we shall see the Fabians to have done. Thousands of little organizations in years passed have formed with mush the same objects in mind but after a few months, years, or perhaps decades have faded away and died with only a few history books, some obscure records, or perhaps nothing at all to remind posterity of their existence. What then, is the explanation for the amazing impact the Fabian Society has had on the political thought and life of the twentieth century?

The answer seem to lie in the quality of its membership and chiefly of its leaders. The Society when it was very young attracted to it a number of men who possessed outstanding abilities along several line. Most of them achieved fame in their own right apart from the work of the Society. In fact, it might be said that the fame of the Society rested on the work of these few men. This division will be devoted to brief surveys of the lives and works of some of them.

George Bernard Shaw[40] was born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1856. He came from a semi-genteel background, his father

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Henderson, op. cit., is one of the best sources on the life and works of Bernard Shaw.

having been the non-too-reputable cousin of a baronet. Shaw went to London in 1876 having had no formal college training but with a good knowledge of music and literature. He gained a scanty living in journalism for a few years all the while voraciously educating himself by reading and discussion. Joining the Fabian Society in 1884 he became interested in economics and political science. His life thereafter was devoted to the propagation of Socialism and his literary talents being his strongest among many strong talents he used his plays as a medium for this purpose. He has been quoted as saying that economics was as essential to his art as anatomy was to Michelangelo. Although he has gained reknown as the world's leading dramatist he holds his accomplishments in the spreading of Fabianism dearest to his heart. Shaw has meant many things to many people; his wit and flair for publicitly have oftern obscured to the the true purpose of his life which was to make men see the folly of their present forms of social organization and the paths which they might take to amend them.

> ". . .George Bernard Shaw was a born fighter and formidable controversialist. Were his ardent temperament and dour determination not counterbalanced by an analytic intellect averse from all romanticism, Shaw would have been a revolutionary leader."[41]

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41 Max Beer, A History of British Socialism, 2 vols. G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., London. First published, 1919; second edition, 1929.

Sidney and Beatrice Webb.shared with Shaw the glory and work of directing Fabianism on its upward path. Sidney was born in London in 1859 and was educated in private schools and on the continent largely through his efforts. He rose in the Colonial Office by competitive examination to the position of Clerk 1st Class. He possessed an amazingly retentive mind and first impressed Shaw as a man who knew everything about everything. The two men have had a lifelong friendship; possessing complementary talents they have constantly worked with and aided eachother, Shaw the popularizer and Webb the investigator. In 1891 Webb resigned his government work and devoted his full time to the London County Council in which he took a leading part. Later he became lecturer on Political Economy and Public Administration at the London University School of Economics which he helped to found. As Member of Parliament he was on numerous Royal Commissions and when the Labor Government of 1924 was in power he held the position of President of the Board of Trade in the Cabinet. Webb wrote more Fabian Tracts than any other members and greatly influenced the writing of others.

In 1892 Webb married Beatric Potter who was from a markedly different strata of life. He fater was a rich contractor and railway director and she was familiar with the governing class. However, she became bored with her life and decided to devote her writing and investigatory talants

to the righting of the living conditions of the poor. She helped her cousin, Charles Booth, in his great survey of London slum conditions the results of which were published in Life and Labor in London at the End of the Eighties. Later, when working on one of her books on the cooperative movement she met Webb. Their marriage marked the beginning of a great partnership in the annals of sociological writing. They poured forth a long series of books on English social and economic history, on local government, and on social practice and organization. Among them are A History of Trade Unionism, English Local Government, A Constitution for the Socialist Commonwealth of Great Britaim, and finally in the 1930's, Soviet Communism: A New Civilization? Both Sidney and Beatrice had long tenures on the Fabian Executive Committee. She was a member of the Poor Law Commission of 1905-9 and the Minority Report which she and her husband drew up completely eclipsed the majority report and received a wide circulation due to the efforts of a government official to cover it up. The following statement about Sidney Webb would equally apply to Beatrice:

> ". . . the enemies of the Socialist and Lobour cause recognize in him a redoubtable opponent for the reason that his methods are those of a scientist who founds his theories on a sure basis of fact, and who blinks no fact even when it may appear to run counter to his theories."[42]

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42 Herbert Tracey, editor, The Book of the Labour Party: Its History, Growth, Policy, and Leaders in 3 vols. (London: Caxton Publishing Co., Ltd.)

Graham Wallas, another of the "Essayists", was a professor and author. Born in 1858, his father was a minister and young Wallas attended Corpus Christi College at Oxford from 1877-81. For a time he was a school-master and later a university extension lecturer. He was a Fabian member from 1886 to 1904.and during this time was on the London School Board and the Technical Education Board of the London County Council of which council he was a member from 1898-1904. AS lecturer at the London University School of Economics he wrote several books on political science, the most important of which are Human Nature in Politics, The Great Society, Our Social Heritage, and The Art of Thought.

Besant, Olivier, and Cole. does not complete the list of prominent Fabians but merely of those who have achieved more outstanding recognition than the others. Annie Besant was a well-known agitator among the London radicals even before the Fabian Society was born. She had led a great strike of the London match-maker girls in the 80's. For a short time her attention was taken by the Fabians but Fabianism was far too unspectacular and dispassionate a movement to long engage the energies of this strong-willed, emotional, evangelist, and she soon left the Fabians for the more intriguing Theosophical Society of MMe. Blavatsky. Here her talents found ample exercise in promoting the mysticism of India throughout the rest of the world. She was carrying on heartily with the work of Theosophy at the time of her death

in the early thirties.

Sidney Olivier was a colleague of Sidney Webb in the Colonial Office in their early years. Olivier Carried on in the Field of Government and finally reached the post of Cabinet minister in the first Labor Government of 1924. His intimate connections with the Fabian Society made him a force on the side of Fabiansim whereever his influence was felt.

Goerge Douglas Howard Cole became active in the Fabian Society about 1915. Thus he was not of the generation of the "old Gang." After the first World War he became vitally immersed in the Guild Socialist movement in England which had a remarkable renascence at that time. The movement soon lost its force and Cole took up the work of rejuvenating the somewhat senescent Fabian Society. He is its leading figure today, and with the help of his wife, Margaret, is responsible for most of the pamphlets that the Society put out today.

7. Later History.

Having accomplished much in the permeation of English opinion, having taken an important part in the building up of a political party in its own intellectual image, having launched a peroidical, the New Statesman, and the London School of Economics and Political Science, by the 1920's the Fabian Society gave evidence of going into a

decline. The "Old Gang" was ageing and the flood of books and pamphlets lessened. About the only activity that was continued with the same faithfulness was the Summer School and these sessions, it is said, were chiefly leisurely holidays where elderly Fabians came to play tennis with their grandchildren.

The ILP had distintegrated from internal dissentions and the S.D.F. had failed in a quarrel in policy with the Labor Party. There seemed to be no one who was carrying on in the van of ideas, so to speak. About this time a group of young Fabians became aware of this neglect and decided to revitalize the party. They realized there was as much need then as ever for contunuous study and reaearch in social and economic problems if a program is to be kept up with the times. The Labour Party needed to be able to draw on the wealth of information and ability that the Society could furnish now as much as it did in the early days. Under the vigorous leadership of G. D. H. Cole this rejuvenation was started and has continued down to the present day. The Society is once more pouring forth a stream of reading material on every current issue.[43] During the last war, for the third time in the Society's history there was a great upsurge in the growth of provincial Fabian Societies. This crop filled up the crop left by the shrinking up of the I.L.P

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43 Canadian Forum, op. cit., p. 10.

and the decline of Labor Party activity. But the Fabian Society is not a dead organization. Its membership is now over three thousandand political events in England presently indicate that its unpledged, non-dues-paying members number well into the millions.[44]

8. Summary.

This chapter has been a brief survey of the Fabian Society. After looking into its early history with its beginnings in the Fellowship of the New Life, its aims and objects were investigated and found to be the establishment of Socialism by constitutional methods. By following a policy of education of the public and the capture of local governmental offices and the permeation of groups of all kinds endwith the alliance with the British Labor Party, the Fabian Society has promoted its doctrines. Its activities have included the publication of books and tracts and lecturing. It has maintained a loose organiztion and requires its members merely to sign its Basis, which is a statement of its minnimum aims. Its greatness is most likely due to its outstanding members, chiefly G. B. Shaw and Sidney and Beatrice Webb. The Society has lately been rejuvenated by G. D. H. Cole and now maintains a high level of activity.

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44 G. D. H. Cole, Fabian Tract No. 258, The Fabian Society: Past and Present, 1942.

CHAPTER III

THE ESSENTIALS OF FABIAN SOCIALISM

The ingredients of Fabian Socialism are economics, sociology, and political theory. In this chapter an attempt will be made to measure these ingredients according to the Fabian rule, analyse them, and see what part they take in the baking of the Socialist cake. First consideration will be given to the Fabian view of society and the place given to the"class struggle." Then attention will be turned to the economics of Fabianism, its economic antecedents, Fabian distinctions, views of land and capital, monopoly and competition, and nationalization. Next the Fabian political theory will be discussed particularly in regard to theories of political and social change, evolution, revolution, and constitutionalism. Fianlly, the Fabian socialistic state will be outlined with special reference to the concepts of individualism and collectivism.

1. The Fabian View of Society.

The Fabians were not unlike their predecessors in the realm of Socialism, namely, the Owenites, the Chartists, the Marxists, and the Utopian and Anarchist Socialists of all

countries, in their view of society. Everything was reducible to the idea of the "class struggle." The Fabians saw society as divided into only two classes, the rich, who were idle, and the poor, who worked. The privileged class lived at the expence of the poor and the institutions of society were such that this condition was perpetuated. The upper class was instilled with the idea that it was the only possible and just order and the lower had a feeling of hopelessness, despair, and resignation to their lot. In Tract No. 5, Facts for Socialists, a picture is drawn of society as divided into"two nations," the idle rich and the drudging poor. However the Fabians did not see it quite as simply as it is here expressed. Everyone in society had to come under one of the two classifications and obviously not everyone is rich and idle or poor and drudging. Some people are rich and yet work and some people are poor and also idle. The people to whom the opprobrious title "rich" is applied are those people who live on rent and interest.[1] They may do some sort of work but their primary source of livlihood is from the rent of land and the interest from capital. The poor, on the other hand, include all those who work in any way for a living, whether it be by digging coal from out a mine or whether it is by sitting in an office in London and managing all the affairs of a combine of coal mines. A better description

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1 For a discussion of Fabian concepts of rent and interest, see under next division sub-sectio, Rent and Interest.

of these two classes is that of "owner" and "producer." The owner class is a fractional part of the total population while the workers comprise all the rest. This state of affairs is the cause of all the ills of society, among which, conspicuous in the England of the Eighties, were poverty, unemployment, ill-health, ignorance, poor housing, and the sordidness of living in general.

> "Socialists affirm that the evil can never be remedied until the 'two nations' are united by the restitution of public purposes of rent and interest of every kind, and by the growth of social sympathy promoted by the accompanying cessation of class distinction."[2]

The emphasis placed by the Fabians on the taking of rent and interest by the owners from the producers was by no means original to them. Nor did they have to have recourse to obscure thinkers of times past or to foreign "ismS" uncongenial to the British mind. They had only to look a few years back to the revered philosopher of the Victorian era, John Stuart Mill, who was well known to the Fabians and especially to Sidney Webb, the leading Fabian economist.

> "It is therefore 'The enormous share which the possessors of the instruments of industry are able to take from the produce' (J. S. Mill, quoting Feugueray, Principles of Political Economy, p. 477, popular ed. of 1865) which is the primary cause of the small incomes of the comparatively poor."[3]

> "They (the owners) live, in the main, upon the portions of the national product which are called rent or interest by the legal 'guarantee to them of the fruits of the labor and abstinence of others, transmitted to them

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2 Tract No. 5, Facts For Socialists by Sidney Webb, 1887. p. 18.

3 Ibid., p. 5.

without any merit or exertion of their own'. (J. S. Mill, Political Economy, popular edition, p. 129)[4]

The Fabian researchers delved into the problem of rent and interest to determine just what effect it had on theeconomy of the nationand found that

> "Rent and interest alone, the obvious tribute of the workers as such to the drones as such, amount demonstrably to . . . one half of the wealth they produce to a parasitic class, before providing for the maintenance of themselves and their proper dependents."[5]

The problem of rent and interest is the fundamental issue in the minds of the Fabian Socialists. It poses the problem for which they supple the answer:

> ". . . the income of a private proprietor can be distinguished by the fact that he obtains it unconditionally and gratuitously by private right against the public weal, which is incompatible with the existence of consumers who do not produce. Socialism involves the discontinuance of the payment of these incomes and addition of the wealth so saved to income derived by labour."[6]

2. Fabian Economics.

The striking thing about the economics of Fabian Socialism is that they primarily are non-Marxist. Although they were well grounded in the Capital they took much more from the thoroughly British economists of the early nineteenth century and chiefly from Ricardo, J. S. Mill, and Jevons. Most significantly of all they did not accept Marx's theory of the labor basis of value. Neither did they put

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4 Ibid., p. 11.

5 Tract No. 7, Land and Capital by Sidney Olivier, 1888. p. 13.

6 Fabian Essays in Socialism, edited by G. B. Shaw. (Boston, The Ball Publishing Co., 1911) p. 22.

much faith in the theory of dialectical materialism nor the theory of the revolutioanary class struggle. They thought rather in terms of social evolution and their ideas came rather from Darwin, Spencer, and Huxley than from Hegel and Marx. Thus their Socialism was a strictly British affair. They pictured Socialism as a gradual development of British institutions which sets "out rather to use things as they were than to destroy them."[6]

Rent and Interest. The foundation stones of Fabian economics are its theoris of rent and interest. The best exposition of them is to be found in the first essay of the Fabian Essays in Socialism. In it Shaw "showed that he could beat the economists at their own game of refined analysis."[7] He starts out to prove that rent from land "represents the pecuniary value of the advantages which such land possesses over the worst land in cultivation."[8] To do this he takes the example of the first man to come to a country. Naturally he picks out the best piece of land that he can find. Men coming after him pick out the next best land and the next best and so on until finally there comes a man who figures that there is no land available which will yeild him any more than he could get from working the land of the first man

6 G. D. H. Cole, A Short History of the British Working Class Movement 1789-1927. 3 vols. (London: G. Allen & Unwin, Lt., and the Labour Pub. Co., Ltd., 1927) p.24, v. 3.

7 Markham, op. cit., p. 120.

8 Fabian Essays, op. cit., p. 4. (Quoting Fawcett, Manual of Political Economy, Bk. II, Ch. iii, p. 116 (1876).

man and paying him rent. Suppose the best unused land will produce $500 worth of goods in a year and the first man's land is yielding $1000 worth. Why not pay the first man $500 for for the use of his land and keep $500 for himself which is as much as he could get from the best unused land and besides he would be working in the center of the community with all the attendant advantages. The first man, who may have grown tired of working, will readily agree, as in this way he can get $500 for the rest of his life and do nothing. Thus he becomes the original landlord, a drone who lives on the gift of society. Then, says Shaw, "A few samples of the way in which this simple and intelligible transaction is stated by our economists may now, I hope, be quoted without any danger of their proving so difficult as they appear in the text-books from which I have copied them."[9] And he cites passages from Mill, Fawcett, Marshall, Sedgwick, General Walker, and Ricardo, which in the obscure language of the economists mean exactly the same thing that Shaw had so simply elucidated.

But the process does not stop here. As new tenants present themselves, the neighbors of the first man also become landlords by renting their holdings in the same manner. However, since their income is still dependent on the labor of their tenants they continue to praise the virtue of labor and industry while themselves remaining idle. This contra-

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9 Loc. cit.

diction between principle and practice introduces cynicism and immorality into society.[10]

Finally, all the decent land is absorbed until there is only a few patches of barren mountain tops which will produce only $100 worth of produce a year, making the first man's yeild worth $900 more tham this. So the tenant on that land decides to sub-let his lease for $900 thus giving him a balance of $400 after he had paid his rent of $500. Now there are two idle classes in society, the second group living on slightly smaller incomes than the oldest families.

> "It has,in fact, come to this, that the private property in Adams landis divided between three men, the first doing none of the work and getting half of the produce; the seconddoing none of the work and getting two-fifths of the produce; and the third doing all the work and getting one-tenth of the produce. Incidentally also, the moralist who is sure to have been prating somewhere about private property leading to the encouragement of industry, the establishment of a healthy incentive, and the distribution of wealth according to exertion, is exposed as a futile and purblind person, starting a priori from blank ignorance, and proceding deductively to mere contradiction and patent folly."[11]

But the state of society wherin every man is either a landlord ar a tenant is nearly ideal compared to things as they are. For at some point comes the first proletarian, they man who can find no land at all. But he has brains so he boldly bids $1000 for the original land and because he has figured out a way to make it yield $1500 he makes a very good living for himself. This is called"rent of ability." Now, due to the technological inventions of this man and

10 Ibid., p. 5.
11 Ibid., pp. 5f.

others like him, the produce from the worst land in use is now doubled, which in turn doubles the yield of the first man's land to $2000. This supplies the opportunity to the proletarian who is not clever, for he can easily bid $1600 for the land and still have $400 left for himself. But at this point the value loses all realation to the difference between the best and the worst land. It is just a payment to get the use of the land at all and its price is not regulated by what the purchaser could do for himself on land at the margin of cultivation, but by such factors as the landholder's desire to be idle and the proletarian's need for subsistence. The price become regulated by what is known as "supply and demand."

> "The payments rise until the original head rent and quit rents appear insignificant in comparison with the incomes reaped by the intermediate tenant right holders or middlemen. Sooner or later the price of the tenant right will rise so high that the actual cultivator will get no more of the produce than suffices for subsistence. At that point there is an end of sub-letting tenant rights. The land's absorption of the proletarians as tenants paying more than the economic rent stops."[12]

The final step in the process comes when the next proletarian can afford to rent no land. With no money to his name he decides to sell himself. To the tenant cultivators of the land this is the greatest bargain imaginable. For, if they can get more in produce from their land than it takes to repay the men for their work, the purchase of such

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12 Ibid., p. 8.

men would be sheer gain. Actually there would be no outright added cost; it is simple that a worker would produce more than his own price leaving a surplus for the buyer. At first there is a rush of the proprietors to buy the labor of this man and they bid eachother up. But soon other proletarians appear on the scene who will under bid the first one in selling their labor. Finally there are so many that they are in excess of the number needed to meet the requirements of the proprietors. Now their exchange value is zero. Their labor is valueless except at such times as it is needed more than others. The proof of this is in the great number of unemployed. But why are there any wages at all for those who can find a purchaser? Because bodily requirements of the laborer are such that he must have at least a minnimum subsistence to keep him in relative efficiency. Out of this situation arises the economic system in existence today called capitalism. It is merely the purchasing of human labor at the lowest possible price by those whose income of rents and interest is great enough to permet them to accumulate enough to hire a lot of labor and with the excess produce of that labor produce more capital with which to increase their income of interest. The income of the workers is so low that cultured pleasures are out of their reach so that they resort to those of procreation which in turn increases their number, further decreasing their bargaining power. Thus their lives become more diseased and degraded, while the landlord and

proprietary classes seek ever more socially useless articles and services on which to spend their incomes.[13]

Land and Capital. Having described the functions of rent and interest in the capitalistic economy it is yet necessary to point out one more important thing. That is, the relation of land and capital. The followers of Henry Goerge who were quite numerous in the Britain of the Eighties, were content with the advocacy of the single tax on the unearned increment of land. But the Fabians said that the income from the rent of land was not one bit different from the interest from capital. Both were the result, not of exertion on the part of the owners, but rather of the social factors for w which the owners were in no wise responsible. There fore both rent and interest should be returned to society and used to benefit the workers.[14]

It is said that land with a farm on it yields rent while one with a railway on it is, to the railway company, capital yielding interest. But economically there is no difference between them as sources of revenue. Both the landlord and the shareholder live on the produce extracted from their property by the labor of the workers.[15] Really, although wealth is commonly defined as capital produced by human labor, railways, docks, mines, canals, etc., which are

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13 Ibid., pp. 15ff.
14 Sikes, op. cit., p. 115.
15 Fabian Essays, op. cit., p. 17.

considered capital are really only elaborate modifications of land.[16] They have so much in common that there is no point in distinguishing them.

Further, in regard to value and yield, capital acts in exactly the same way that land does, fluctuating strictly in accordance with the influence of social factors upon it.

The usefulness of fixed and unchangeable forms of capital increases and decreases through external aauses, just as does that of land.

> "If the instruments of production must be classified, the best division of them is into immoveables and movables, the annual value of the buildings, railways, mines, quarries, waterworks, gasworks, durable fixed machinery, and many other so-called forms of capital, manifestly agreeing with that of land in fluctuating according to causes of which the effects are generalized in the 'Law of Rent' of abstract economics."[17]

Thus if rent and interest are of exactly the same social origing they should both receive the same treatment at the hands of Scoialists. Thus,

> "As we have seen, incomes derived from private property consist partly of economic rent; partly of pensions also called rent, obtained by sub-letting of tenant rights; and partly of a form of rent called interest, obtained from special adaptations of land to production by the application of capital: all these things being finally paid out of the difference between the produce of the workers labor and the price of that labor sold in the open market for wages, salary, fees, or profits. (Note: This excess of the product of labor over its price is treated as a single category with impressive effect by Karl Marx, who called it'surplu value' (Mehrwert). The whole, except economic rent, can be added directly to the incomes of the workers by simply

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16 Tract No. 7, Capital and Land by G. B. Shaw. p. 6.
17 Loc. cit.

> discontinuing its exaction from them. Economic rent, arising as it does from variations of fertility or advantages of situation, must always be held a common or social wealth, and used, as the revenues now raised by taxation are used, for public purposes . . ."[18]

The Fabian View of History. The second essay in the book of"Fabian Essays" is written by Sidney Webb and is a discussion of the "historic basis" of Fabian Socialism. He points out that the nineteenth century began as the heydey of individualism, when Adam Smith's theories were generally accepted and government was by an oligarchy which ruled in favor of a privileged group of owners of land and capital. However, as political rights were gradually won by an ever increasing percentage of the people, private ownership of the means of production was increasingly subjected to government regualtion and curtailment until now Socialism is but the articulation of principles which are pretty generally recognized by the mass of the people, and have been and are being incorporated into the government.[18]

Next Webb points out that Fabian Socialism differs greatly from the older and other socialisms in that it is in keeping with the evolutionary principle. Other socialists had pictured a society which was all perfection, so perfect that it could be no better and therefore was static and unchanging. Webb shows the folly of such Utopian societies and cites the recent discoveries of Darwin to verify the

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18 Fabian Essays, op. cit., pp. 26f.

Fabian thesis that society is organic in nature and evolves gradually. There are certain tendincies in history which are practically irresistible. Democracy was one such tendency and Socialism is another. With the development of each some type of social organization must be superceded. In the case of Democracy it was the old Regime, in the case of Socialism it will be capitalism, However, the change-over must be

> ". . . (1) democratic, and thus acceptable to a majority of the people, and prepared for in the minds of all; (2) gradual, and thuscausing no dislocation, however rapid may be the rate of progress; (3) not regarded as immoral by the mass of the people, and thus not subjectively demoralizing to them; and (4) in this country at any rate, constitutional and peaceful."[19]

Next the England of Feudal times is surveyed with a view to economic and political organization and the factors that led to its breakdown. Chief among these was the introduction of the steam-driven machine which in turn brought about the industrial revolution. The Machine Age is destroying old conceptions of individualism and private property. It worsened the condition of the masses who in turn have demanded a greater hand in the government which in practical terms means an increase of Socialism and the mutualization of social relationships.

Webb follows the economic course of the last two centuries through the period of mercantilism when the state mastered industry and enforced archaic and uneconomic restrictions upon it to the revulsion toward these policies

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19 Ibid., pp. 30f.

which led to an excess of individualism which reached its height about the first quarter of the 19th century. At that time nothin deterred the entrapreneur in his mad quest for profits. Women and children were forced to owork under the most greivous conditions, for long hours, for a mere pittance which did not permit them to live on a human scale.

> ". . . the Liberal mill-owners of the day, aided by some of the political economists, stubbornly resisted every attempt to interfere with the freedom to use"their" capital and "their" hands as they found most profitable, and (like their successors) predicted of each restriction as it arrived that it must inevitabley destroy the export trade and deprive them of all profit whatsoever."[20]

Having drawn the era of individualism in rough outline, pointing out the reason for its being"carelessly accepted as the teaching of both philosophy and experience that every man must fight for himself, and the devil take the hindmost,"[21] Webb goes on to tract the line of thought that has led up to the beliefs of the Fabians.

The first revolt, he claims, came from the artists, the poets and writers at the Lakes. Coleridge tried to cover it up with German Transcendentalism. Robert Owen and his utopian ideas were rebelling agianst this unchecked individualism. The workers themselves never could be convinced that the system was really just or fair. Carlyle's powerful pen made the first really important dent in the shielf of the system. He kept alive the ideal of nobler ends

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20 Ibid., p. 36.
21 Ibid., p. 40

than the mere making of money in this world. Maurice, Kingsley, Ruskin were others who dared to challenge the middle class ideals of the day. And finally the ideas of Comte and J. S. Mill, Darwin and Spencer about the evolutioanary processes of the social organism penetrated to the minds, though not the books of even the professors of political economy.

But not only in the artistic and intellectual fields was there a revulsion to this rugged individualism. Even the so-called practical men saw that the most valuable asset of a country, its man power, was slowly being devoured and degraded by the utter lack of consideration for human resources. Gradually the politicians noticed the obvious and the government began too take a hand toward controlling the undisciplined race for profits. A series of great Acts, Drainage Acts, Truck Acts, Mines Regulations Acts, Public Health, and Adulteration Acts, etc., were passed, all of which exerted some restraint on private initiative. The liberty and income of the owner of capital was gradually more and more imposed upon by the state. Factories came under inspection, regulations had to be observed, and taxes took more and more out of the incomes that were well above the average.[22]

In summary, Webb points to the growing consciousness that society is a developing, organic body which must always be seeking ways of improving itself. Society is not just an aggregate of individuals, rather

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22 Loc. cit.

> ". . . it possesses existence distinguishable from those of any of its components. . . . The community must necessarily aim consciously or not, at its continuance as a community; its life transcends that of any of its members; the interest of the individual unit must often clash with those of the whole. Though the social organism has itself evolved from the union of individual men, the individual is now created by the social organism of which he forms a part; his life is born of the larger life; his attributes are molded by the social pressure; his activity, inextricable interwoven with the others, belong to the activity of the whoel. Without the continuance and the sound health of the social organism, no man can now live or thrive; and its persistence is accordingly his paramount end. His conscious motive for action may be, nay, always must be, individual to himself; but where such action proves to be inimical to the social welfare, it must sooner or later be checked by the whole, lest the whole perish through the error of its member."[23]

There is nothing essentially offensive about such a statement, and indeed it can be used to justify the acts of any type of government from the mild socially direccted democracy to the extreme communist or fascist dictatorship; but it one that must be used guardedly and whose application msut be well thought out. The same applies to such statements as

> ". . . the perfect and fitting development of each individual is not necessarily the utmost and highest cultivation of his own personality, but the filling, in the best possible way, of his humble function in the social machine. We must abandon the self-conceit of imagining that we are independent units, and bend our jealous minds, absorbed in their own cultivation, to this subjection to the higher end, the Common Weal.[24]

This attitude, plus his views of the history of the nineteenth century during which developments in the govern-

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23 Ibid., P. 50.
24 Ibid., P. 52.

ment of England were increasingly in the direction of greater control of private enterprise, made Webb feel that England was experiencing an "irresistible glide into collectivist Socialism." It seems as if history is bearing out his hopes, at least in the case of England. But Webb was not blind to some of the possible consequences of the principles he preached about the place of men in the community. The following conjecture indicates that such things as Bolshevism, Nazism, and Fascism were a possible concomitent of the ideas which were in his time coming generally to be accepted.

> "It is, of course, possible, as Sir Henry Maine and others have suggested, that the whole experience of the centure is a mistake, and that political power will once more swing back into the hands of a monarch or an aristocratic oligarchy. It is, indeed, want of faith in democracy which holds back most sympathisers with Socialism from frankly accepting its principles. What the economic side of such atavism would be it is not easy to forecast. The machine industry and steam power could hardly be dismissed with the caucus and the ballot box. So land however, as Democracy in political administration continues to be the dominant principle, Socialism might quite safely be predicted as its economic obverse . . ."[25]

The "economic side of such atavism" is, as we of this generation so well know, monopoly capitalism, which in some cases leads to Fascism, wherein the "machine industry and steam power" need not be dismissed, but can be made very good use of. In a later chapter it is hoped to see just how far the recent history of England bears out the proposition that as long as democracy in political administration contin-

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25 Ibid., pp. 54f.

ues to be the dominant principle, Socialism may quite safely be predicted as its economic obverse.

Socialism and Industry. William Clarke, the next Fabian Essayist, writing on the industrial basis of Fabianism, devotes some space to the relatively new ideas that the functions of ownership and management are now divorced. The idea was formerly thatthe capitalist performed an indispensable function in that he not only iversted his capital in an enterprise but he also assumed its management and direction and was primarily responsible for the success of the venture. On him fell the burden ofall decisions relating to the conduct of the business. Changes in economic practices have made this view of the capitalist's function completely untenable. The joint stock company has superceded the old ways of organizing enterprise. Under this type of organization ownership and management are entirely separate. The owners are the few or the many people who invest their money in the shares of stock o f the enterprise and then merely sit back and collect dividends. The management of the business is in the hands of people who have little or no investment in it.[26]

This is not the only divergence between capitalist theory and capitalist practice. Supposedly competition is at the basis of free enterprise. The theor is that the competition between entrepreneuers will work automatically to reduce the price of commodites to the lowest possible price

26 Ibid., 76-9.

where some profit can still be made and thus the consumer is the greatest benefitter from such a system. And this is one theory of the older economics which really works. In fact, it works so well as to render the whole system futile. For, if carried to its logical consequence it come to the point where nobody makes anything; this is known as"cut-throat competition."

> "Competition, necessary at the outset, is found ultimately, if unchecked, to be wasteful and ruinous. It entails great expense in advertising; it necessitates t the employment of much unproductive labor; it tends to the indefinite lowering of prices; it produces gluts and crises, and render business operations hazardous and precarious. To escape these consequences, the competing persons or firms agree to form a close combination to keep up prices, to augment profits. . ."[27]

Thus arises the monoploy which has become the most significant factor of the present age. It has invaded almost every type of business enterprise until now "Almost the only persons still competing freely are the small shop-keepers, trembling on the verge of insolvency and the working men competing with one another for permission to live by work."[28] Some of the practices indulged in by monopolists are detailed by Mr. Clarke; they are familiar to any who have the slightes knowledge of modern capiatlist economics. He concludes that "as sin when it is finished is said to bring forth death, so capitalism, when it is finished brings forth monopoly."

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27 Ibid., pp. 81f.
28 Loc. cit.

But the monopoly is not the final step on the road to strangulation of the individualist free-enterprise economy. A more elaborate form known as the "trust" is yet to supercede it. A trust is the combination by the stockholders of a number of corporations in an effort to destroy competition within the whole industry or allied industries with all powers invested in the hands of a small group of trustees. By means of a trust this group can control the supply of commodities and necessities, kill competition, regulate quality, and keep the prices of consumer goods far beyond any fair and equitable value.

In view of the discussion of monopolies and trusts, what conclusions does the Fabian draw? Chiefly that

> ". . . granted private property in the raw material out of which wealth is created on a huge scale by the new inventions whcih science has placed in our hands, the ultimate effect must be the destruction of that very freedom which the modern Democratic State posits as its first principle. Liberty to trade, liberty to exchange products, liverty to buy where one pleases, liberty to transport one's goods at the same rate and on the same terms enjoyed by others, subjection to no Imperium in imperio: these surely are all fundamental democratic principles. Yet by monopolies every one of them is either limited of denied. Thus capitalsim is apparently inconsistent with democracy as hitherto understood. The development of capitalism and that of Democracy cannot proceed without check on parallel lines."[29]

The Fabian Solution. Such is the Fabian analysis of the capitalistic free-enterprise economy. It presents a picture of management divorced from ownership, and of mono-

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29 Ibid., p. 89.

polistic, undemocratic practices, in which by far the greater number of people, the workers and the consumers,(being practically one and the same) are at adecided disadvantage. What is the Fabian solution to the problem?

In the first place Socialism would displace the capitalists altogether. They perform no socially useful function that could not be better performed by the people themselves. The "enterprising capitalist" is said to be necessary to the well-being of society--he provides employment. But his terms are momopolies and restrictions of trade. These cannot be accepted say the Fabians. Socialism can do without him, "just as society now does without the slave-owner, the feudal lord, both of whom were formerly regarded as necessary to the well-bieng and even the very existence of society." Society itself can employ managers to run its industries while the dividends instead of going to a class of idlers will revert to the people to be spent as their needs require.

> "As regards great combinations of capital, state action can take one of three courses. It may prohibit and disolve them; it may tax and control them; or it may absorb and administer them. In either case the Socialist theory is ipso facto admitted, for each is a confession that it sis will to exercise a collective control over industrial capital."[30]

The first of the proposals is too defintiely reactionary. It would mean the turning back of the pages of time to a point where the government would have such arbitrary powers

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30 Ibid., P. 91.

as to say that industry should go back to the chaos of free competition and renounce all the logical and actual benefits of combination. It would say "thus far and no farther shalt thou go", thereby denying the capitalist the precious "incentive" which is the life-blood of competition.

The second scheme is the one that will most likely be adopted. It will be inefficient, and ineffective, butit will give the capitalists a chance to contrive ways of avoiding control and taxation and thus to perpetuate a little longer his milking of his fellow men. It will only be after a lon process of trial and error with such futile means that men will recognize what the Socialists have seen all along, that just as the logical consequence of laissez faire is monopoly, so the only logical way of dealing with monopoly is by the complete absorption of it by the community which will administer it in the interests of the people as a whole.

The Fabian Socialist State. The Fabian Socialist state is treated in two essays by Graham Wallasaand Annie Besant. In the first, entitled Property Under Socialism, Graham Wallas tells us that inder the Socialistic state the means of production would be owned by the community and operated by a number of governmental and quasi-governmental units. The means of consumptions on the other hand would be owned by the people. For instance, individuals as they are now constituted are better suited to cooperative production than they are to cooperative consumption. The factory system could

be maintained by the Socialist state but communal living with everything owned by the state would not be at all acceptable to people. They would have to be allwed to own their own houses, their furniture, their utensils, and many other moveable private belongings. Also, they would have to be allowed to add their own labor to these private belongings and trade or sell them at a profit. Thus the Fabian Socialist state will be acombination oof things as they are under the capitalist free enterprise state with a greatly increased degree of public ownership of industries, both productive and service.

Public ownership would be administered from two governmental levels, the national and the local. Productive enterprises and capital of national importance such as railroads, mines, and harbors, would be managed through national agencies while such things as street transportation, gas, and water supply would remain under the control of the municipalities, much as they are at present. Certain activities such as the press would continue unaffected by the governmen, and the freedom of expression of opinion would be considered as part of that which belongs to the individual.[31]

The most controversial aspects of any socialistic program are found in the specific proposals of its sponsors. Many people think that the idea of Socialism is a good one but that there will never be enough egreement between men as to how things should be done on a cooperative basis as to

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31 Ibid., pp. 119-135, et passim.

enable it of fulfillment. And here too, Socialists themselves cease their cooperation and begin to bicker. Mrs. Besant's description of industryy under Socialism is only one, and inasmuch as it was written as far back as 1889 it undoubtedly contains much that later Fabians do not advocate.

She suggests that industries be managed through elective communal councils which in turn will appoint committees to manage particular industries, i.e. the appointment of supervisors and foremen. Election of the foremen directly by the workers would not be conducive to good factory discipline. The communal councils would be represented in a national Industrial Ministry which would plan and direct the industrial life of the nation. Some of the expedients she advocates are equality of payment to workers; the freedom of choice of occupation; but with shorter hours in the less attractive occupations such as mining; the increase of mechanization. Under a system of equal pay work or starve will be the same crude stimulus as it is under capitalism. It will be contended that this stimulus will provoke the worker to do only the bare minnimum of work to get by on but Mrs. Besant counters that "the desire to excell, the joy in creative work, the longing to improve, the eagerness to win social approval, the instinct of benevolence" and other such noble aspirations will prove sufficient. There is nothing in these expressions of sentiment to convince one that these

altruistic motives will suffice in a sufficient number of cases to raise production in the Socialist state very high. Mrs. Besant's analogy of the soldier who does his duty bravely on the field of battle and the college athlete who jumps his heart out on the playing field although in neither case is there any hope of monetary gain does not convince anyone who either knows anything about college athletics or being a soldier.32However, these ideas are those of the early Fabian Society and there is no evidence that Fabians continue to think in these terms. The experience of Soviet Russia has undoubtedly convinced any others who continued to hold any doubts about the matter. Unequal remuneration seems at present the only system by which a modern industrial nation can produce most effectively.

The Transition to Socialism. One of the most important problems of Socialism in the question of the transition from the present condition of society under free enterprise capitalism to cooperative Socialism. This is one idea to which the Fabians devoted much consideration in as much as they felt that their theories regarding social change were the distinctive feature of their whole program.

On the matter of social change the ideas of the Fabians are rooted in the ideas of evolution as were becoming popular around the world in the latter part of the last cen-

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Sikes, op. cit., 121f.

tury. Although these ideas had had a vague existence in the intellectual milieu of as much as a century before this, it was Charles Dearwin's scientific discoveries which put ground beneath them and enabled them to be accepted by many people the world over.

Darwin's ideas of the growth of biologic organisms were adapted by the Fabians to the social organism. Things organic never remain static; they are dynamic and ever-changing. The older Socialists had pictured society as a complete, stable machine, functioning without change. To effect a democratic change was like replacing a part. To effect a change such as the transition to Socialism would require tearing the whole structure apart and building a new one. To the Fabians such a prodedure seemed absurd, not to say impossible. To them asteady stream of changes was the normal, expected social process. Fabians did not give up the ideal of a perfect society, but they put little faith in its attainment and realized that primarily they must be practical about directing the cours of social change toward a more perfect community of human beings.[33]

> "The growing recognition, due in part to Darwin, of causation in the development of individuals and society; the struggles and disappointments of half a century of agitation; the steady introduction of Socialist institutions by men who reject Socialist ideas, all incline us to give up any expectation of a final perfect reform"[34]

But it must not be assumed that automatic and inevitable social change is always for the better. History pro-

33 Fabian Essays, op. cit., p. 131.
34 Ibid., p. 119.

vides numerous examples of desastrous social effects which might have been avoided if the application of intelligence had been resorted to instead of stupidity, inertia, self-interest of a few, and other motives that are always at work in societal relations. Specifically,

> "Socialism involves the introduction of design, contrivance, and coordination, by a nation consciously seeking its own collective welfare, into the present industrial scrambel for private gain."[35]

In order to do this it is necessary to have a plan. Socialists must map out a specific approach to the problem of a more efficeint and moral society. This approach must be realistic and practical, not idealistic and visionary. They must have aphilosophy of history and a philosophy of human nature which are in keeping with actual human experience. Perhaps no better guide could be found than the history of Socialism itself in the nineteenth century. The Socialism of Owen had been utopian and it had gotten nowhere. That of Marx was revolutionary and had only repelled the British people. The Fabians renounced as futile the practices of their contemporaires in the social agitation field. They their indirection, their unscientific methods, their emotionalism.

> "The same explosive vigor and emphasis on sweeping assertions rather than on clarity which marked the aims and political tactics of the Faderation (S.D.F.) appeared also in their propaganda. A book, England For All; a pamphet, Socialism made Plain; a magazine, Justice; public speaking; a mass meeting; stone throwing

35 Ibid., Preface, p. x.

in Pall Mall--all were hopefully regarded as good propaganda, but with no consideration for good for what end and appealing to just what group. These Social Democrats were clear on the necessity for revolution; they they were clear on arousing the members by another pamphlet or another mass meeting; but the gap between the mass meeting in West Ham next Thurdday night and the coming of the revolution was colossal and the ways of bridging it obscure."[36]

All this ill-considered agitation was just so much wasted energy from the Fabian point of view. Socialists must accept what they find in society. It may not be encouraging that society cannot be turned inside out overnight, but the most reasonable and scientific view of things says that it can not. With this dictum Socialists be content. They must work with what they have. But what do they have? They have the "usual" facilities of the British Constitution.

The Fabian Society is dedicated to the advancement of Socialism by the lawful, constitutional methods at hand. The extension of the suffrage has made the revolution as unnecessary as it is futile, and the Fabians felt that once the voters could be made to realize what sor t of a society they could make for themselves merely by the use of this all-powerful weapon, the props of capitalism would slowly crumble away. In Tract No. 13 Shaw advises:

"Remember that Parliament, with all its faults, has always governed the country in the interest of the class to which the majority of its members belonged. . . . and it will govern in the interest of the people when the majority of it is selected from the wage earning class."[37]

~~36 Tract No. 70, Report on Fabian Policy, p. 5.~~ See p. 69.

37 Tract No. 13, What Socialism Is. by G. B. Shaw, 1890. 4pp.

The Fabians were thus firm supporters of Democracy. In fact, they believed that the more Democracy the greater the liklihood of Socialism. They assumed, however, that people with the right to vote would ipso facto use this right in their own best interests. But to further insure that they did this they must be taught where their best interests lie. This as we have seen was a cardinal Fabian function. But even with the vote and the knowledge of how to use it most effectively there is no guarantee under the present British constitution that the desired results will follow. The British government was not yet a perfect instrument for the democratic realization of the perfect state, at least not at the time that the Fabians set out to reconstruct society.

> "Democracy, as understood by the Fabian Society, simply means the control of the administration by the freely elected representatives of the people. . . . When the House of Commons is freed from the veto of the House of Lords and thrown open to all candidates from all classes by an effective system of payment of representatives and a more rational method of election, the British Parliamentary system will be, in the opinion of the Fabian Society, a first rate practical instrument of democratic government."[38]

Much of what is complained about here has already been remedied. The veto of the Lords is still usable but with a clear majority a particular party has nothing to fear from it, although it can be very effective against a coalition that is not too firm. Members of Parliament are now

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38 Tract No. 70, Report on Fabian Policy, p. 5.
Note 36 should read "Helen Merrill Lynd, England in the Eighteen-Eighties (N.Y. Oxford Univ. Press, 1945) pp. 385f.

paid at least a living wage and elections methods have been improved. But the significant thing about this quotation is the Fabian view that the best democracy is unicameral and that the will of the majority should be absolute. Were it objected that there is hereby created a great danger to the rights of minorities it would undoubtedly be answered that if the people show the integrity that a people sincerely seeking to improve themselves should show in their handling of the ballot, men who are who are capable and willing to institute Socialism will be elected to parliament; and men who have the inclination to institute the Fabian type of Socialism will not be men who will disregard the human rights of any group. Thus it is seen there is a great moral responsibility that attaches to Socialism which indicates the moral foundation of the whole idea of Socialism.

"The Inevitability of Gradualness." The chief characteristic of the Fabian theory of political development is slowness, gradualness. Sidney Webb's classic characterization of the Fabian program for Socialism as the "inevitability of gradualness" has now become famous.

> The Fabian Society accepts the conditions imposed on it by human nature and the national character and political circumstances of the Englaish peopel. It sympathises with the ordinary citizens desire for gradual, peaceful changes, as against revolution, conflict with the army and police, and martyrdom. . . . It therefore does not believe that the moment will ever come when the whole of Socialism will be staked on the issue of a single general election or a single Bill in the House of Commons, as between the proletariat on the one side and the proprietariat on the ohter."[38]

38 Tract No. 70, Report on Fabian Policy, p. 4.

Not only must the people use the franchise for the election of representatives of the workmen, but there are other means at hand for the service of Fabiand Socialists.

> "Legislative reforms are needed but they must be supplemented by a thoroughly organized exercise by all local authorities, from Parish to County Councils, of the powers they already possess, as well as by acquisition of new and more far-reaching powers."[39]

And there is where one of the chief difficulties lies. The inertia and ignorance of the people is one of the most discouraging facts encountered by those engaged in a program of political reform. "The difficulty in England is not to get more political power for the people but to pursuade them to make use of the political power they have."[40]

The mechanics of the transition from capitalism to Socialism are treated by Shaw in the Essay entitled "Transition." His contention is that socialisation will proceed slowly by the democratic devices available. Land will be first and then the key industries, until finally many of the nations key industries will be under the absolute or the indirect control of the state. The former owners of all this capital will most likely be repaid wiht government bonds. Then by levying an exceedingly high rate on incomes and inheritances, the revenue will be raised for the retiring of the debts thusincurred plus the interest.[42] Thus the pro cess of socialization which has been progressing slowly for

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39 Tract No. 5, Facts for Socialists, pp. 18f.
40 Tract No. 70, op. cit.
42 Fabian Essays, op. cit., pp. 157-183, et passim.

years will be stepped up considerably. As time goes on it should increase its pace perceptibly. But--

> "There will never be a point at which society crosses from Individualism to Socialism. The change is ever going on; and our society is well on the way to Socialism. All we can do is consciously cooperate with the forces at work, and thus render the transition more rapid than it would otherwise be."[43]

2. Summary.

In this chapter it has been pointed out that the Fabians divide society into the idle rich who live on the gift of society, namely, rent and interest, and the workers, whether by hand or brain, who must receiver what is left over from the produce of their labor after the lions share of rent and interest have been appropriated. There is a fundamental antagonism between these two groups. Land a capital are of essentially the same charater, economically considered, as the income of each is primarily socially produced. Society develops in an evolutionary, organic way which makes the final attainment of Socialism, already well accomplished, a virtual certainty, barring possible atavistic developments. Industry under Socialism will be owned and managed by elected councils of the people who will administer it in their interests. People, being more suited to cooperative production that cooperative consumption be be allowed to own many types of moveable property and their

43 Ibid., "Industry Under Socialism," A. Besant, p. 137.

homes. The transition to Socialism will be gradual in keeping with evolutionary processes. It will have to wait for enough of the public to be informed of their situation to use to permit the democratic, constitutional processes of government to be used to promote each step in the idrection of Socialism. The overthrow of capitalism by peaceful, democratic processes is as certain as was the overthrow of the ancien regime by the forces of democracy. Capitalism is not suited to the modern world; it has been outgrown; with the increasing realization of this by the people of the world, Socialism will gradually and inevitably replace it.

CHAPTER IV

FABIANISM AND THE BRITISH LABOR MOVEMENT

Fabianism is not and never has been a "popular" movement. The members of the Society have never believed that Fabianism could or shouldbecome a mass movement vitalizing huge sections of the population into activity for the cause of Socialism. But this does not mean that the Fabians have been unconnected and completely insular to all other movements of this nature. Indeed, it has already been notedthat in keeping with its policy of permeation the Fabian Society encouraged its individual members to promote Fabianims in every way they could and especially by joining and acquiring key positions in other organizations, parties and movements. Perhaps the most significant of its permeating activities was inconnection with the British Labor Movement. In fact, permeation was herein carried so far that it was no longer permeation, but for the first time the Fabian Society completely identified itself with and became a constituent part of another organization, namely, the Labor Party.

In this chapter and attempt will be made to describe the part played by Fabians and Fabianism in the Labor Movement. In order to put Fabianism in the proper perspective with regard to the Labor Movement, the thread of socialist-

labor activity will be picked up at the close of the Chartist period and briefly surveyed in the era of the zenith of Liberalism, 1855-1880. Then, with the stage set for the advent of the Fabian Society, the turbulent eighties of the Social Democratic Federation, the Socialist League, and general labor unrest will be seen as its early environment. The nineties produced the Independent Labor Party which finally wedded its ideas to those of the Trade Union Congress to produce the Labor Party. The events of these years were of great significance to the future of Britain. As will be seen, it was no small part that the tiny Fabian Society played during these formative years.

1. British Labor 1855-1880.

The Aftermath of Chartism. With the fading away of the Chartist movement about 1855, British labor entered a period in which the tide of social agitation receded. For the next ten years or so the condition of the workers actually improved. Trade improved as a result of the repeal of the Corn Laws and real wages rose so that the minds of the workers were diverted temporarily from schemes of social change. Among the things which helped to do this were events in the internationaly sphere; the Polish insurrections, the fight for Italian Liberation, and the American Civil War. These years were the zenith of Liberalism when Liberal thought reigned practically unchallenged throughout England and when

labor politics almost disappeared from view. The masses were quiescent; it was the golden era of Victorianism when God was in his Heaven and all was right with the world.[1]

It was during these years that trade unionism got a great impetus as the worker joined its ranks in increasing numbers as the best available means to bettering of their condition. Another movement gained great popularity at this time as a social expedient, namely, the cooperative. Good times had turned the worker's head. Now he aimed to bargain on more equal terms with his employer and to invest his savings in a cooperative whereby he, too, could experience the thrill of a dividend return. Things were such that in 1870 an old Chartish leader, Thomas Cooper, was led to say that the workers of England no longer talked intelligently of politics as they had in the pubs of the 1840's. Now they talked about their cooperative shares and gambled on their greyhounds.[2]

The I.M.W.A. In 1864 the International Working Men's Association was founded with Karl Marx at it s head. This organization was dedicated to the Marxian principle of the conquest of political power by the workers and this was regarded as the only means of improving the condition of labor.[3] Marx was an advocate of revolutionary trade unionism and held that the trade unions had hitherto spent too much of their

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1 Harry Laidler, Social-Economic Movements. (N.Y., Thomas Y. Crowell Co.,1944) pp. 173-183.

2 George Douglas Howard Cole, A Short History of the British Working Class Movement 1789-1927, 3 v. (London: G. Allen and Unwin Ltd. and the Labour Pub. co.,Ltd., L927) p. 86.

3 Ibid., pp. 87f.

time in disputes with capital over immediate and trifling issues and had not clearly discerned their true function of combatting overtly the present capitalistic, socio-economic system. To do this the unions, he said, must consciouly act as the foci of the working classes to effectuate their complete emancipation. Beer says that

> "The heroic and social revolutionary part which Marx assigned to the trade unions as the centres of economic action, add the subordination of parliamentary action as a means, were eagerly accepted by the anarchist and anti-parliamentary adherents of the I.W.M.A., who soon eliminated the subordinate means and laid stress on the main propositions."[4]

The I.M.W.A., known as the "First International," soon was divided into warring and discordant factions based on differences in methods rather than principle. The Frenc, Italian, Spanish, and Russian representatives advocated either revolutionary economic action or secret insurrectionary conspiracies. Marx's views of society as essentially one of class struggle did much to gain adherents to this plan of procedure, although Marx himself did not entirely discount the possibilities of political and parliamentary action.

With the Reform Bill of 1867 came greatly increased manhood suffrage for the British working classes and this did much to impair the enthusiasm of the British trade unionists for the International. As its revolutioanary and anarchist tendencies became more and more evident and the

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4 Beer, Max, A History of British Socialism, 2 v. (London: G. Bell and Sons Ltd. 1929 ed. first pub. 1919) pp. 219f.

British and Continental newspapers became more and more hostile, the British trade union leaders, who were at this time greatly concerned about gaining respectability in the eyes of the public, began to withdraw. As Marx put it, "they offered up the principle of trade unionism on the altar of middle-class legitimization!"[5] No doubt at first the British leaders who subscribe to the doctrines of the International probably saw in them no more than a gesture toward international amity among worker and never had any idea as to the lengths to which it might be construed. Indeed, to them, the International was quite incidental to their own struggle at home for the Reform Bill and their great strivings for legal emancipation.[6] The I.W.M.A. continued on until 1872 when its internal dissentions brought about its dissolution.

2. The Turbulent Eighties.

About 1880 Liberal thought had nearly reached the point of exhaustion. It was facing a crisis in which it seemingly could not fulfill its promises. The economic condition of the country was not satisfactory; the depression was continually growing worse and unemployment was steadily mounting; more and more trade unionists were being elected to Parliament; the agricultural workers were organizing; the opponents of Free Trade were gaining adherents; the Irish

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5 Cole, op. cit., p. 88.
6 Ibid., pp. 86f.

clamor for home rule was steadily mounting; and finally the situation throughout the Empire was growing darker.

As a result of these tendencies the working classes of England throughout the Eighties were awakened more forcefully to a realization of the insecurity of their economic situation than they had been at any time since Chartism. The workers were therefore willing to listen to what agitators might have to say to them. The principle of these were the Social Democratic Federation, the Socialist League, and later the Fabian Society. And while the results of their work in the Eighties are hard to evaluate, it can be said that the Socialist organizations played upon the feelings of discontent and insecurity in such a way as to produce a definitely radical psychology among the masses which had not been duplicated since Chartism. The dissatisfaction with the order of things was even carried into the unions which had risen in strength in the third quarter of the century but which, after the principles of reform had been enacted, had relaxed into conservative routine and somnolence which included aristocratic internal stratification as to trades and skills.[7]

The S.D.F. and the Socialist League. In 1881 there was established the Social Democratic Federation (S.D.F.) under the direction of Henry Hyndman, a man of ability and

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7 D. C. Sommervell, The Reign of King George the Fifth. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1935) p. 321.

means who had been converted to Socialism. Until 1880 Marx's works had been unavailable in English but Hyndman had read them in French, and, impressed with their ideas, had written a book called England For All in which he set forth Marx's doctrines on capital and labor. The two men knew eachother from some personal contacts and Hyndman was greatly impressed with Marx's erudition while Marx, on the other hand, thought Hyndman superficial and unstable. When Hyndman, aware of the strong British prejudice against foreigners (Marx was a German Jew), failed to properly acknowledge his indebtedness to Marx by name, the latter became very incensed, having spent years of his life in the writing of Das Capital and adopted an attitude toward Hyndman which never permitted a reconciliation. Nevertheless, Hyndman continued to interpret Marx to the English-speaking world by writings and especially through his direction of the S.D.F.[8]

The Federation was aimed at the rescusitation of Chartism and the gaining of greater political rights for the workers, the most radical element of their program being the nationalization of land. Soon, however, the organization became full-fledgedly Marxist. Its members participated in open air meetings, pamphleteering, parading, etc., for universal suffrage, the elimination of a standing army, free education, free justice, Home Rule for Ireland, and the regualtion of the production of wealth by society in the common interests

8 Laidler, op. cit., p. 187.

of all, and for the collective ownership of production, distribution, and exchange.[9] Some of the most important people connected with the S.D.F. besides Hyndman were the poet, William Morris, E. Belfort Bax, Eleanor Marx, daughter of Karl Marx, Henry H. Champion, Harry Quelch, the editor of their newspaper, "Justice," and Helen Taylor, step-daughter of John Stuart Mill. In 1884 there was a schism within their ranks and some members formed the Socialist League which operated on much the same principlesand doctrines as the S.D.F. but soon came under the influence of the anarchists and began to disintegrate.

It must be said for the S.D.F. and Socialist League that they were truly instrumental in spreading the consciousness of Socialism in the England of the Eighties and especially among the lower classes. They worked close to the laborers, cunducting rallies, staging demonstration, aiding strikers, and establishing socialist groups in the poorer districts of London and in the industrial areas. But although the S.D.F. and the Socialist League were the most prominent propagandists of the times their doctrines were not fully accepted except by their most earnest followers. The great mass of workers, although sympathetic to the ideas of a more equal distribution of the product of labor and a more prominent place in the sun for the workers, did not take well to the doctrine of the revolution of the proletariat. Thus

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9 Beer, op. cit., pp. 227ff.

the two Socialist groups of the early Eighties created amovement among the workers which was positive and pregnant with possibilities, but yet because the leaders continually demanded a violent over throw of the government that was so utterly alien to the British mind and temperament, the net effect was one of uncertainty and apathy.in the greater part of the people toward any positive action. The S.D.F. and the Socialist League,

> ". . . having helped to create . . . could not control. Neither the unionism of the miners, dockers, and gaswerkers, nor the widespread sympathy which flowed out towards its efforts for a raising of the 'bottom dog" was fundamentally Marxist. The movement among the masses, in so far as it was Socialist at all, created a Socialism alnost without doctrines; and the new Socialism of the intellectuals began far more as an ethical than as an economic movement. It owed more to Mill than to Marx, and, if it sought a radical reconstruction of the social system, was strongly disinclined to accept the class-struggle as the instrument of change."[10]

The Advent of the Fabians. These were the times that saw the birth and early growth of the Fabian Society. Although Shaw and a few others of the Fabians may have been active in the agitations of the Marxist groups, the Society as a whole soon lost all sympathy with their approach. Apart from their difference in social status and temperament, the Fabian Society early began to emphasize certain fundamental differences between themselves and the other Socialist Societies. They did not intend to become the focal point of a mass movement; they did not attempt to lead public demon-

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10 Cole, op. cit., p. 22.

strations; they did not believe a revolution of the proletarait was either plausible or desirable; they were instead dedicated to study and investigation and to the propagation of their finding, conclusions, and opinions.[11]

We may conclude, then, tht Socialism in England during the Eighties was the result of two principle factors: one was the economic condition of the country as evidenced in the unemployment and growing distress of the workers, coupled with the apparent impotence of Liberalism to cope with the situation and maintain the prosperity of the period 1855-1875; and the other was the work of the radical societies, principally the S.D.F., the Socialist League, and the Fabian Society. As the decade drew to a close and the revolution had not come the prospects of increasing success for the Fabian program of permeation and gradual socialism became brighter.

3. The Fabians and the I. L. P.

The first important influence of the Fabians was exerted inconnection with the Independent Labor Party (I.L.P.) In 1892, Kier Hardie, a Scottish miner, was elected as an independent labor candidate to the House of Commons. Hardie was a man who had become strongly imbued with Socialist ideas and who brought to his political activites the fire of an al-

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11 See above pp. 17-24.

most religious devotion to the cause of the workers. In 1893 Hardie brought about the organization of the I.L.P. at a conference at Bradford with Fabians in attendance. In fact, Shaw says that he and Hardie drafted the program of the party on the steps of the conference hall. "Its Socialism therefore from the start took the Fabian form: an accumulation of social reforms was eventually to add to Socialism."[12] The aim of the I.L.P. was the collectivization of the means of production which was to be achieved by means of parliamentary action.. The party was dedicated to the principle of getting more labor men elected to Parliament and to the various councils of the local governments and in this way to influence legislation,in the direction of social reform. Its platform was not greatly unlike that of the S.D.F. except that it was much more sympathetic to trade unions;and when working with the trade unions revolution, class warfare, and the other Marxian concepts were omitted in the Fabian fashion and the problems of social change were approached fromthe ethical and democratic points of view which appealed to the British workmen.[13]

The I.L.P. was composed largely of workers who were not in sympathy with the more radical views of the S.D.F. and the Socialist League and yet felt that trade unionism in itself would never effect those changes in the economic and

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12 F. G. Underwood,"Fabian Socialism", Canadian Forum, Vol XXVI, No. 303, Apr. 1946. p. 8.
13 Laidler, op. cit., p. 316.

and social conditions of the workers that were necessary. They thought that an organization was needed which could exert a positive influence in the political life of the country.

> "Its particular contribution to Britiah Socialism was the recongintion that the Trade Union Movement, although dominated largely by Liberals, was yet the essential basis for a working-class political party. It was a practical expression of the slogan, "Workers Unite!"
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> ". . .it worked at the street corner and in the mill, the factory, the mine, and the Trade Union Branches. . . Week in, week out, from thousands of platforms it gospel was proclaimed. It attracted members of the middle class as well as workers. . . . This organization, with its branches scattered widely thoughout the country, carried on a ceaseless propaganda for Socialism, and for the conversion of the workers to the conception of independent political action. Its note was its inclusiveness. It did not preach doctrinaire Socialism but, using the tools provided for it by the Fabian Society, preached a practical doctrine on an ethical basis."[14]

The relationship between the I.L.P. and the Fabian Society according to Cole was one of mutual benefit.

> "Hardie and the I.L.P. were a genuine and influential movement lacking a clear and constructive policy; the Fabians were a group of highly intelligent leaders lacking a rank and file. They helped and mutually formed eachother. . . . The existence of the I.L.P. led them away from theorizing to the formulation of a practical and constructive programme which they could pursuade the I.L.P. to accept."[15]

The I.L.P. was to the Fabians the most "natural and easiest for them to permeate." They directed the I.L.P. towards"piecemeal nationalization" and the "gas and water"

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14 C. R. Attlee, The Labour Party in Perspective (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1937) pp. 35 and 38.

15 Cole, op. cit., pp. 23-4.

socialism of municipal enterprise. The I.L.P. attracted many people who were willing to devote time and energy to the unglamorous work of municipal commissions, departments, boards, and investigations. This proved to be the practical side of Fabian Socialism. The provincial Fabian Societies which had grown up before the formation of the I.L.P. gradually merged into the larger organization. Ordinary people found the doings of an active, politically minded party more congenial than discussions and debates aboout economic theory and the other practices of the London parent Society. "There was no room except here and there, for an I.L.P. branch and a local Fabian Society in the same place. The men who were active in one were were also active in the other."[16]

The Labor Representation Committee. Inasmuch as the I.L.P. worked actively with the trade unions, many trade union members were converted to the Fabian view of Socialism. These members were constantly trying to influence the Trades Union Congress (T.U.C.) to take a more active part in politics.and to espouse the Socialist cause by the formation of a great third party based on trade unionism. They were largely unsuccessful until 1899 when a resolution was carried at the Trades Unions Congress for the calling together of a conference of Trades Unions, Socialist societies, and Cooperatives for the formation of a Labour Representation Com-

16 Pease, op. cit., p. 103.

mittee. At first a committee consisted of four members of the T.U.C.'s Parliamentary Committee and included a Liberal, a Fabian, a social-democrat, and one with Socialist leanings. The balance of the committee was composed of two members each from the I.L.P., the S.D.F., and theFabian Society. The Fabian members were G. B. Shaw and E. R. Pease, secretary of the Society. The Socialists were in greater numbers on this initial committee and were far superior to the trade unionists in intelligence, knowledge, and energy.[17]

The first step was to call a conference to consider what action should be taken and in February, 1900, the conference met in London with 120 delegates present representing over half a million working-class members of the trade unions and the Socialist groups. The conference voted for the support of candidates belonging to the organizations represented and appointed a Labor Representation Committee. The first L.R.C. consisted of seven trade unionists, and two members each from the I.L.P., the S.D.F., and the Fabian Society. J. Ramsay MacDonald, a former Fabian executive, was elected secretary; he immediately set out to gain the support of the rest of the T.U.C. (It can readily be seen that in respect of numbers of members the Fabian Society was greatly over-represented on the L.R.C., a fact which attests to the contention that the influence of the Society was far out of proportion

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17 Laidler, op. cit., p. 317.

to its size.) In September, 1900, at a general election the L.R.C. put fifteen candidates in the field, but only Kier Hardie and one other were successful.[18]

4. Fabianism and the Labor Party.

The stage was now set for the advent of the Labor Party. The Socialists had gone a long was in converting the trade unionists to an acceptance of the ideas of political action but the great majority of their members were still either liberal or conservative in their politics and candidates running on a labor or and independent ballot were considered by many as a wasted vote.[19] In 1903 the famous Taff Vale decision of the courts inflicted a heave fine on the South Wales miners and engendered a fear among the other unions that their treasuries might in the same way be wiped out if this ruling was recognized. The conservative government did nothing to allay their fears and in the 1906 general election out of a field of fifty candidates placed by the L.R.C. twenty-nine, to the astonishment of all England, were elected to Parliament with a vote of 323,000. This marked the real birth of the British Labor Party.[20]

It is difficult to assess the influence of Fabianism on the forces that led up to the establishment of the Labor Party. As has been noted, the Fabians doctrines had been taken up by the I.L.P. so that it was well permeated with

18 Laidler, op. cit., p. 318.
19 Cole, op. cit., p. 42.
20 Laidler, op. cit,, p. 318.

Fabians and Fabianism. Both these organizations were amply represented on the L.R.C., and the Fabians well out of proportion to their numbers. And yet the only declared aim of the Labor Party in 1906 was that of the resolution of the T.U.C. on 1899, "to devise ways and means for securing of an increased number of labor members to the next Parliament."[21]

> The Labor Party, like the rest of us, had two parents: it was the offspring of an alliance between Socialism and the Trade Union Congress; between men who believed in a fundamental reorganization of society and desired a new political party as the instrument of their purposes, and men who, not necessarily Socialists at all, desired anew political party which would give expression to whatever might from time to time be the practical demands of the organized bodies of trade-unionist workers."[22]

It would have been virtually impossible in 1906 to formulate a program of aims for the newLabor Party. The vast majority of its members were trade unionists who were still weded in spirit to one of the old traditional parties, chiefly the Liberal. They had supported the new party because they saw in it a more effective means of representing their interests in the House of Commons than through the offices of either of the old parties. They were not evern aware of the great significance of the new Labor Party and the type of thinking for which it stood. Besides this factor there were the divergencies between the three representatives of Socialism. The S.D.F. was avowedly Marxist and had little to do with the L.R.C.; the Fabians were anti-Marxist, undoc-

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21 Ibid., p. 317.
22 Sommervell, op. cit., p. 317.

trinaire, and convinced of the "inevitably of gradualness;" the I.L.P. put no faith in the revolution, spurned the permeation and cooperation of the Fabians with the Liberals, and hoped to steer a middel of instituting a great movement on the basis of the ethical and emotional appeal of Socialism. With these divergent outlooks and aspirations on the part of the constituent parts of the Labor Party it is no wonder that a definite programme of Socialist action was not agreed upon for twelve years.[23]

During the period between 1906 and 1918 the Labor Party practiced what the Fabians preached. That is, it was a party of reform using its small delegation in the House of Commons for the purpose of securing all the social and labor legislation possible, either by alliance with one of the older parties or the other. It spurred the Liberal Party in the years before the first World War to enact a program of social legislation that makes this period comparable to the other great reform periods of British history. There was some objection on the part of the more radical Labor supporters to the policy of strong collaboration of the Liberals and Laborites, called "Lib-Labs." Some of the Fabians themselves were critical. It was at this time that some of the younger Fabians under the leadership of G.D.H.Cole launched the movement of Guild Socialism as a protest aginst the or-

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23 Egon Wertheimer, Portrait of the Labor Party, translated from the German.(London and N.Y.: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1930) pp. 47-49.

thodox parliamentary Fabian Socialism of their elders.

> "The experience of practical politics was showing that the Fabian process of permeation is one that can work both ways. It is possible for Socialists to become permeated with Liberalism as well as for Liberals to become permeated with Socialsim. And this criticism of the gradualist, reformist, Fabian method has been one which impatient radical socialists have been making continually since those days."[24].

The World War, however, saw the disintegration of the Liberal Party. By 1918 there had arisen a definite need for a change of organization and outlook by the Labor Party. It was imperative to find ways of broadening its appeal to the masses and of retaining and enhancing the power which it had gained under wartime conditions.

The Fabianization of the Labor Party. The answer to this need was published as a statement of the party program by the Labor Party Conference of 1918 entitled, Labor and the New Social Order. This declaration definitely established the Pritish Labor Party as the party of Socialism. How far this declaration of Socialism is influenced by Fabianism can best be discerned from the fact that it was penned by Sidney Webb, the leading Fabian.[25] It was a twenty-three page pamphlet of fine print in which four main points were elaborately developed. The first was the Universal Enforcement of the National Minnimum, the minnumum that would ensure each member of the community all the leisure, health,

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24 Canadian Forum, op. cit., p. 8.
25 Ibid., p. 9.

education, and subsistence that he needs. Second, the Democratic Control of Industry, which meant the nationalization of mines, railways, and electrical power and the manufacture of power for national consumption. It also included the extension of the municipalization of industries and services and of governmental projects of diverse natures. Third a Revolution in National Finance which was mainly the imposition of a steeply graduated income and inheritance tax and the conscription of wealth. Fourth, Surplus Wealth for the Common Good. This meant that the income from the taxes listed above should be used for national health and education, scientific investigation and research, and for the promotion of the arts. At the same convention in 1919 the Labor party changed its rules to permit individuals to join the party as well as organizations. Ten years later, in 1928, the Labor Party again revised its program in another manifesto entitled Labor and the Nation. This further committed the Party to the nationalization of coal, land, transport, power, the Bank of England, and life insurance, as well as other industries and services.[26]

Wertheimer affords an estimate of the influence of Fabianism in the two manifestos of the Labor Party but it must be remembered that he is a German Socialist and has a definitely continental point of view.

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26 Laidler, op. cit., pp. 476f.

"Here speaks the voice of the old Fabian. Its tones, too, are heard in the clauses dealing with the solution of unemployment by administrative mea sures. The class-struggle is set aside in favor of "permeation". "Labor and the New Social Order" is the offspring of Fabian thought--the first (and presumably the last) decisively to influence Labour Party policy.

Although the programme reveals more mercilessly than any other the limitations of Fabian thought, yet on the practical side it bears clear evidence of the triumph of that genius for grasping immediate realities that has ever distinguished the British Labor Movement and has lent it such formidable aid in its rise topower. The statements of principle have today (1929) only a certain historical value as representing its outlook in a former stage of development; but the practical demands, so far as they are yet unappeased, hold as good today as in 1918. The 1928 programme took over the demands of 1918 practically en bloc; . . . The Birmingham Programme ("Labor and the Nation") is in direct descent from that of 1918."[27]

Labour and the New Social Order and Labour and the Nation represent the fundaments of the British Labour Party. With the different elections specific details of the mechanics of socialization have been altered this way or that. But the two most basic principlesupon which the party is founded, namely, Socialism, and the maintenance of democratic processes and freedoms which are also the bases of Fabianism, are still as much a part of the Labor Party as they were in 1928 or 1918. The National Executive Council of the Labor Party reported in 1944 that:

"The Labour Party works for a Socialist future. . . . Capitalism means everywhere the protection of the privileges of the few by the sacrifice of the well-being of the many, and in the relations between states, capitalism means a power-politics which is even more ugly and brutal. This is why the Labour Party is convinced that, only as the framwork of civilization is Socialist

27 Wertheimer, op. cit., pp. 61f.

can we hope both for the assurance of economic plenty and a peace which it is to the interests of all states to preserve."[28]

5. Summary

From 1855 to 1880 British labor had little to do with socialistic ideas other than a short flirtation with the International Working Men's Association. Trade unions grew in number and strength but were not radically dominated. During the Eighties times were not good and radical groups grew up which brought the people to an awareness of Socialism. The Social Democratic Federation, the Socialist League and the Fabian Society were the chief of these organizations. The people largely rejected Marxist ideas in favor of Fabian gradualist ideas so when the Independent Labor Party was founded Fabianism was responsible for a large part of its working doctrines. The Labor Representation Committee which was supported by the Trades Unions Congress was lagely under the influence of Fabian ideas. The first years of the Labor Party saw much cooperation with the Liberals but in 1918 the Party adopted a definitly Socialist program drawn up by Sidney Webb on Fabian lines and has stuct closely to this same program in the ensuing years.

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28 Laidler, op. cit., p. 486.

CHAPTER V

FABIANISM AND THE BRITISH LABOR GOVERNMENT

The words "Fabians" and"Fabianism" have been frequently used in the course of this study. Strictly speaking, Fabians are those persons who make up the membership of the Fabian Society, past and present. Less strictly speaking, Fabians are any who hold to the beliefs of Fabians whether members of the Society or not. The beliefs of Fabians, in general, have been called Fabianism. But, as has been seen, the beliefs of Fabians have not always been uniform. In fact, it was the policy of the Society to permit any divergence of opinion among its members so long as it was not in conflict with the Basis. Even the Basis, however, does not adequately convey the ideas which have come to be most significant of Fabianism, namely, economic planning and constitutionalism. The first idea is not explicitly mentioned in the Basis at all, although it is very much implied, while the second is neither mentioned or implied in the original Basis but in the 1919 revision is recognized by the words, "transfer to the community by constitutional methods." Thus Fabianism, in its broadest terms, has come to mean a constitutional planned economy. Beyond that it means anything that Fabians have ever thought it meant in terms of specific pro-

posals . The primary one of these are listed in the Basis; the others are to be found in the publications of the Fabian Society and in the writings and minds of individual Fabians.

With this in mind it will be attempted in this chapter to relate, in whatever ways are justified, Fabianism with the present Labor Government in England which was voted into office in the July elections, 1945.

The victory of the Labor Party in these elections was the greatest in its history. It was an absolute victory. Twice before, in 1924 and 1929, Labor had been victorious in that it had elected a larger number of candidates to commons than had either of the other two parties, but in such a situation they had had to rely on the Liberals for support of their legislation and so had failed to make any headway in the accomplishment of the provisions of their Socialistic program.[1] But in 1945 there were returned to the House of Commons 394 Labor members, a clear majority of that body.

In connection with the subject for consideration in this chapter, it will be interesting to cite some figures regarding this election. Of the 394 Labor members of the present Commons 229 or 58% are members of the Fabian Society. Of the 82 members of the Labor ministry (including undersecretaries and whips) 45 are Fabians. The interesting thing about this last figure is that if the minister himself is not

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1 Laidler, op. cit., 477-8.

a Fabian he is almost certain to have a Fabian as his under-secretary or at least as his personal private secretary. Even Ernest Bevin, the man who detests intellectuals, has a Fabian as his first lieutenant--Philip Noel-Baker, the Minister of State--and a Fabian as his Undersecretary of State, Hector McNeil. Besides these, many of the lesser official positions are filled by Fabians. Most significant of all, the Labor Cabinet of twenty members draws exactly half its membership from the Fabian Society. This group includes the Prime Minister, Clement Attlee; Herbert Morrison, Deputy Prime Minister; Hugh Dalton, Chancellor of the Exchequer; Sir Stafford Cripps, President of the Board of Trade; Lord Jowitt, Lord Chancellor; A. V. Alexander, First Lord of the Admiralty; Ellen Wilkinson (now deceased) Minister of Education; Tom Williams, Minister of Agriculture; Lord Pethic-Lawrence, Secretary of State for India, and John Strachey, Minister of Food.[2] In the words of Time magazine, "Nearly every member of the present Government was either a member of the Fabian Society or had been consciously influenced by it."[3]

Also reported by Time was the account of the 60th jubillee of the Fabian Society at Albert Hall in London, in November, 1946.[4] The principal speakers--leading Fabians of the day--were Prime Minister Attlee, Herbert Morrison, John

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2 "Canadian Forum, v. XXVI, No. 302, March, 1946. This information was taken from Margaret Cole's Fabian pamphlet, "The General Election of 1945 and After."

Strachey, and Ellen Wilkinson, all wearing red carnations.[5]

The foregoing is adequate testimony that the Labor Government of Great Birtain is more than half Fabian in composition and to this must be added the undoubtedly large number of members of Parliament bothin the Labor Party and other parties who are completely or in lesser degrees sympathetic to Fabianism. Thus if Fabianism in the Labor Government is gauged by the counting of Fabian heads alone, it may justly be concluded that they are practically one and the same thing, and that whatever the specific deeds of this government may be they will nearly all warrant the adjective, "Fabian."

The Fabian Basis commences with the statement that the Fabian Society consists of Socialists. The Labor Government therefore must consist of Socialists and it is a fact hardly worth of proof that it does. The speeches and statements of its leaders make no pretense that it is anything but a Socialist party. Probably the most adequate statement of the present ideals of the Labor Party is to be found in a book published by the leaders of the party in 1940, entitled, Labour's Aims in War and Peace. Herein it is stated in black and white, "The Labour Party is a Socialist party; therefore it conceives of reconstruction in Socialist terms."[6]

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3 "Easy Does It," Time, Vol. XLVIII, No. 20, N. 11,1946. p. 33.

4 It was actually the 62nd anniversary of the Society because the 60th in 1944 had been postponed because of the war.

5 Time, op. cit., p. 33.

6 C. R. Attlee and others, Labour's Aims in War and Peace. London: Lincolns-Prager (Publishers) Ltd., 1940) p. 142.

The two chief ideas embodied in the Basis are that the "reorganization of society" along Socialist lines shall be accomplished by the "extinction of private property in land," and the "transfer to the community, by constitutional methods, of all such industries as can be conducted socially," the interests of the community being the determining factor.

Issuing from the 1940 Conference of the British Labor Party at Bournemouth was a credo called A Socialist Great Britain: A Declaration of Policy. Briefly, these are its provisions. The new Society will be Socialism in action. Economic planning will be bases on wartime control measures which should be the basis of permanent state control. The new economic order will involve the social ownership of the key industries of the country: of the banks, and of coal, power, transport, and land. There will be a reoganization and overhauling of both social and private industries plus control over the location of industries. Labor legislation will be improved and the trade unions will receive fuller recognition. The cooperative movement will be encouraged by the government, as will the alliance of workers whether by hand or brain. A fair distribution of wealth will be achieved by taxation in accordance with ability to pay, drastically graduated inheritance taxes, taxes on excess profits and unearned increment, plus a substantial capital levy. Social planning will be adopted to insure against unemployment, ill health, and old age. Unemployment is believed to

cause the principal crises of capitalistc society which can only be relieved by war. Housing and education will also receive a major share of attention. The machinery of government will be overhauled with the abolition of the House of Lords and the reorganization of Commons, the Cabinet, and the Departments. Labour demands, and will mete out, social justice.[7]

This, then, is the declared policy of the Labor Party which is now in control of the Government of England. At no point does it conflict with the tenets of Fabianism. Every article has a precedent in the literature of the Fabian Society. The two principle ideas of the Fabian Basis mentioned above concerning the transfer to the community of land and such industries as can be conducted socially are firmly imbedded in this declaration of policy. That there is no intention of abandoning that traditional forms of British constitutional democracy is attested in the following excerpt:

> ". . . its Socialism is built on a profound faith in the people of Britain, and a determination to press for the necessary social changes upon the basis of democracy and Justice. We reject all demands for dictatorship, whether from the left or the right. We take our stand upon that faith in reason which looks to the declared will of the people as the only valid sourceof power. So long as that will is nationally respected, we are confident that the historic form of Parliamentary Democracy will provide a highroad along which the nation can pass from an acquisitive to a Socialist society."[8]

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7 C. R. Attlee and others, op. cit., Ch. VII.
8 Ibid., p. 142

It is not within the scope of this research to pursue the actual accomplishments of the Labor Government in England. Enough progress has been made to assure the world that, if nothing else, the Labor Government is absolutely sincere in its loyalty to its professed Socialist ideals. So far it has nationalized the banks and the coal industry, while transport, town-and-country planning, electricity, agriculture, and gas is coming up on the agenda. According to their current schedule England will be completely socialized by the end of 1948. Industry has been classified into three categories: (1) basic industries ripe and over-ripe for public ownership (2) big industries not yet ripe for public ownership but which require constructive supervision (3) small businesses rendering good services which can be left to go on with their useful work. It can readily be seen that with such a system all the business of the country will be under the ultimate control of the government.[9]

It may be said that Fabianism is at its zenith today, at work in every move of the British Labor Government. The The pride and satisfaction that must be the feeling of those pioneer Fabians still alive today, chiefly George Bernard Shaw and Lord Passfield (Sidney Webb), can undoubtedly be matched only by their chagrin at the unnaturally adverse circumstances that confront the men to whom has fallen the

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9 C. Hartley Grattan, "What British Socialism Is Up Against." Harpers, July, 1946. pp. 38-48.

task and responsibility for ushering in the Socialist era in Britain. A people disheartened and enervated, in the aftermath of the greatest was in history, have, at a time when all that was left to them was faith and hope, elected for themselves a task that would have tried the energies and abilities of men to the utmost even in the best of times. But the same spirit that brought success to Fabianism after sixty-five years of determined, intelligent struggle will undoubtedly continue that success into a new and fine era of British history.

Summary

If to count heads alone is to measure Fabianism, the present Labor Government in England is definitely Fabian inasmuch as its membership contains 229 Fabians or 58% of its makeup, and the cabinet and ministries are more than half made up of Fabians. It is a declared Socialist government and its stated policies coincide with the Basis and doctrines of the Fabian Society.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary. The Fabian Society began as a small move- for the reconstruction of society through the regeneration of individuals but soon changed its emphasis to the economic relationships in society. It attracted the services of several highly capable men whose assertions about the injustices of social organization were backed up by facts and who were able to offer remedies for existing evils. The Society rejected the Marxian class revolution theory and proclaimed the gradual evolution of society toward Socialism. Nationalization of land and basic industries ~~was~~ are the essentials of Fabian Socialism ~~and~~ THUS PROVIDING FOR the return to the workers of their just share of produce by higher wages and increased social services. They proceded by investigation, education of others, and utilization of the political processes at hand. The Fabian Society has been a strong influence in Great Britain due to its affiliation first with the Independent Labor Party and later with the Labor Party. Its principles have thus become the settled basis of the Labor Party and form the program of action to be followed by the Labor Government in its plan for the Socialization of Great Britain.

Conclusions. It was stated in the introduction to this study that the past century or more had witnessed the growth of the concept of "collectivism" as opposed to the older idea of "individualism." It was explained that they differed in the emphasis by the former on welfare of the individual and by the latter on the liberty of the individual.

This investigation has enabled the writer to form the following conclusions about Fabian Socialism as it is related to these two concepts, individualism and collectivism. Fabian Socialism acdepts the collectivist principle of the rationalization of social relationships. It retains, however, the individualistic concept of respect for human beings as individuals and their basic freedoms, and believes that to be the only sure basis for the foundation of any society. Fabian Socialism is the attempt to be progressive and yet conservative: progressive in adapting the economic and political institutions of men to their technological progress, and conservative of human decency and individual initiative. It is the attempt to utilize to a greater extent the cooperative tendencies in human nature and at the same time to redirect the competitive tendencies into constructive and beneficial channels. Fabianism is basically moral and ethical. It adopts the collectivist conviction that human labor is necessary to human existence and that labor alone should entitle to a share in the whole product of society. Fabianism

represents the attempt to synthesize the best that collectivist and individualist thought contains in its application of reason to societal relationships while guarding against making the individual merely a cog in a gigantic wheel.

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